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World War II Air Force Cadets at Saint John's

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*75 years ago
this winter:*

The Army Invaded Saint John's

It was in the first week in March, 1943, that a troop train stopping at the little grey Collegeville station unloaded the first contingent of the 87th College Training Detachment at St. John's.

Image published in the 1944 *Sagatagan*, p.65; this version is from the SJU Archives, O:\...\Depts&Programs\ROTC\Army Air Force 1940s\Box1803f5_SJ Army Air Force Unit During WWII.jpg

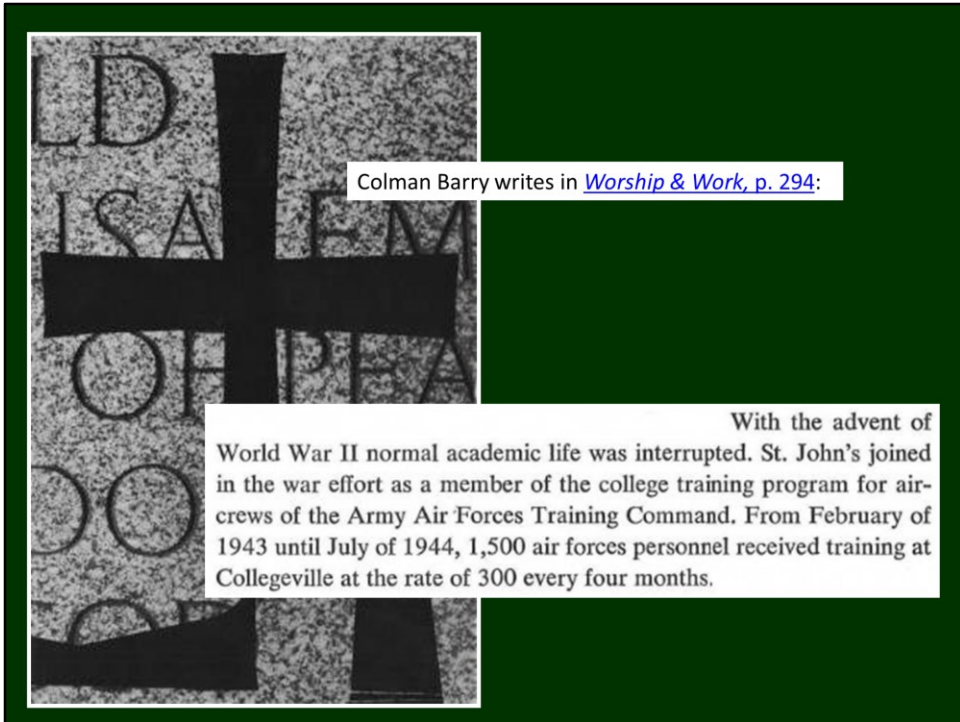
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18471/rec/24>

Text from p. 59,

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18468/rec/24>

Sketch from 1944 *Sagatagan*, p.4

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18441/rec/24>



Colman Barry writes in [Worship & Work, p. 294](#):

With the advent of World War II normal academic life was interrupted. St. John's joined in the war effort as a member of the college training program for air-crews of the Army Air Forces Training Command. From February of 1943 until July of 1944, 1,500 air forces personnel received training at Collegetown at the rate of 300 every four months.

Colman Barry, [Worship & Work, p. 294](#):
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/11244>

The Record

Z-341

Official Newspaper of St. John's University and Organ of the Alumni

Volume 56

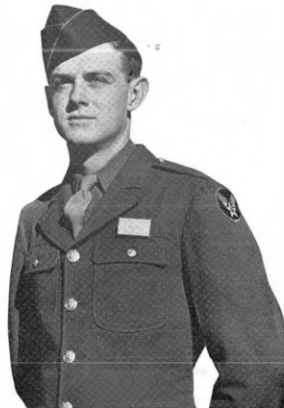
Collegeville, Minnesota, Thursday, February 11, 1943

Number 3

Army Will Use Campus Facilities

1944 Sagatagan, p.7

This is a tribute to the men of the Army Air Corps at St. John's who trained hard and studied long during the preliminary stages of their aviation training so that they might be a credit to themselves, to their country, their corps, and to Saint John's. This 1944 SAGATAGAN gives recognition to the record of these men as future officers of the United States Army and as Christian gentlemen. We know they will "Carry on."



Seeks Center For Training Of Air Cadets

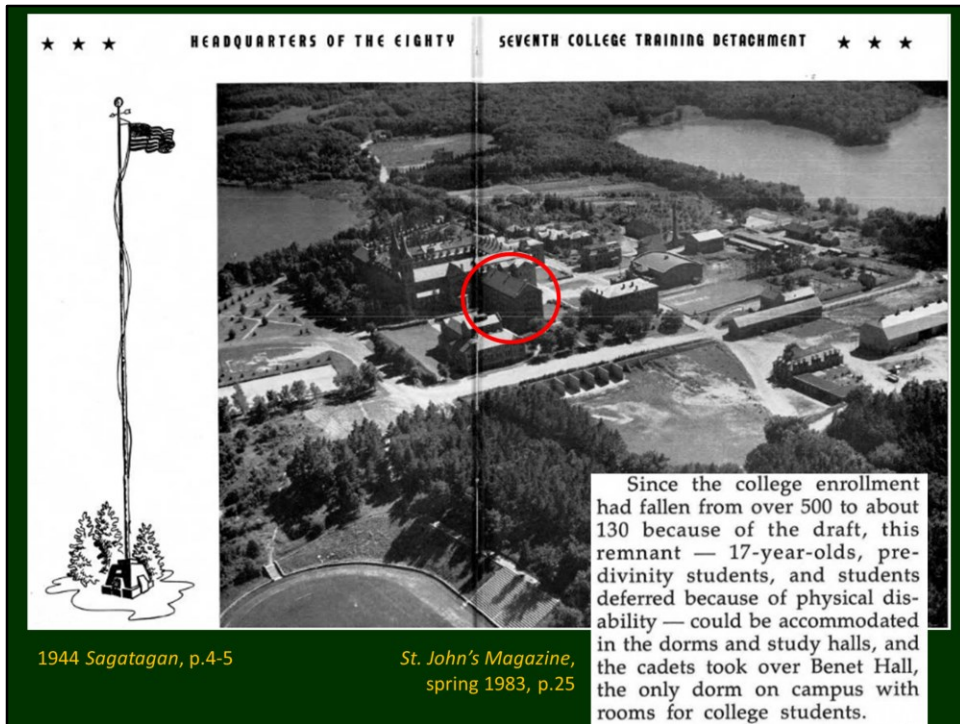
St. John's university has been placed on a list of educational institutions to be used for specialized military training, according to an announcement made last Saturday by a joint committee of the war department, navy department and war manpower commission.

The authorities at St. John's have already expressed their willingness to accept the government offer. Although no formal contract has yet been signed, the present arrangements call for one contingent of 150 air cadets to move into St. John's March 1, with a second group of 150 coming April 1.

In accepting the offer of the armed forces, St. John's emphasizes the fact that all present courses will be continued including those in liberal arts. It is planned that the first group of cadets will move into the upper floors of St. Benet's hall and that the regular students now occupying these rooms will move over to St. Gregory's hall.

p. 1 of the [February 11, 1943](#) issue of *The Record*;
1944 Sagatagan, p.7

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18442/rec/24>



1944 *Sagatan*, p.4-5,

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18441/rec/24>

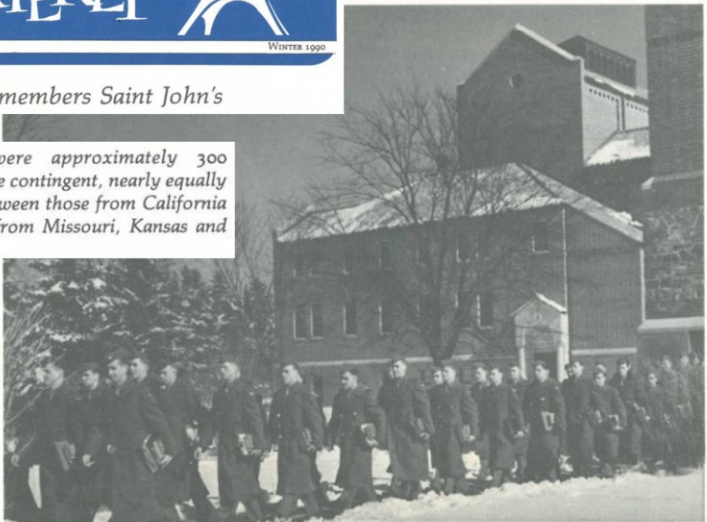
Text by Martin Schirber, OSB, *St. John's Magazine*, spring 1983, p.25

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/9004/rec/3>

Saint John's Abbey
QUARTERLY
VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1 WINTER 1990

Wartime Cadet Remembers Saint John's

There were approximately 300 cadets in the contingent, nearly equally divided between those from California and those from Missouri, Kansas and Illinois.



Anthony Bommarito,
Abbey Quarterly,
Winter 1990, p.8


A "Flight" of student Air Corps cadets marching to classes from their Saint Benet Hall dormitory in the early 1940s program. University Archives Photo.

Text & image from: Anthony Bommarito, "Wartime Cadet Remembers Saint John's,"
Abbey Quarterly Winter 1990 p.8
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/19693/rec/1>

Saint John's Abbey


QUARTERLY

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1
WINTER 1990



. . . On 23 March 1943, we arrived at Saint John's and three feet of snow greeted us; . . .

. . . we were brought inside and after a night's rest and the great breakfast prepared by the German Franciscan nuns (a far cry from Army mess) we knew for sure we died and went to heaven. The food had to be the best I've ever had anywhere, although my mother always felt that I over-rated the Saint John's bread and the entire cuisine.



A "Flight" of student Air Corps cadets marching to classes from their Saint Benet Hall dormitory in the early 1940s program. University Archives Photo.

Anthony Bommarito,
Abbey Quarterly,
Winter 1990, p.8

Text & image from: Anthony Bommarito, "Wartime Cadet Remembers Saint John's,"
Abbey Quarterly Winter 1990 p.8
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/19693/rec/1>



2nd Lt. Thomas Greenwood

COLLEGE TRAINING DETACHMENT (AIR CREW)
ST. JOHNS UNIVERSITY
COLLENEVILLE, MINNESOTA

STUDENT REGULATIONS

1. Only Government clothing will be worn.
 2. All men will be clean shaven at all times.
 3. Uniforms will be kept clean and well pressed at all times.
 4. Hair will be cut at least once each two weeks.
 5. Radios will not be played after lights out.
 6. Smoking will be done only in your rooms.
 7. Rooms will be ready for inspection at all times.
 8. Students will not leave their rooms except to visit the latrine, drinking fountain, or authorized formations during Call to Quarters.
 9. Nothing will be put on walls, or on outside of lockers.
 10. There will be positively no gambling at any time.
 11. No liquor will be brought to the campus.
 12. No one will talk to the officers without going thru proper channels.
 13. Meals will be eaten in a group and not individually.
 14. Candy and cigarettes will be purchased only at the specified hours and eaten only in rooms.
 15. No food will be carried out of the dining room.
 16. Bulletin board will be read at least twice each day.
 17. The Tactical Officer ONLY is authorized to excuse a man from a formation.
 18. There will be no running, or loud noises, and no loitering in the halls.
- By Order of Lt. CASEY:
- THOMAS D. GREENWOOD
2nd Lt., Air Corps
Tactical Officer

Image from the 1944 *Sagatan*, p. 61

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18469/rec/24>

List from the SJU Archives: O:\...\Digital Archives\Depts&Programs\Army Air Force\1801f2 StudentRegulations.pdf

1. Our haircuts had to be maintained; every 5 to 7 days one had a haircut. Cost, 25 cents. Time to implement the cut: about 5 minutes. A portly barber was moved in from Saint Cloud and set up in the basement of Benet Hall—virtually the only building then for non-religious to stay in; the Army had the whole building.

60-

COLLEGE TRAINING DETACHMENT (AIR CREW)
ST. JOHNS UNIVERSITY
COLLEENVILLE, MINNESOTA

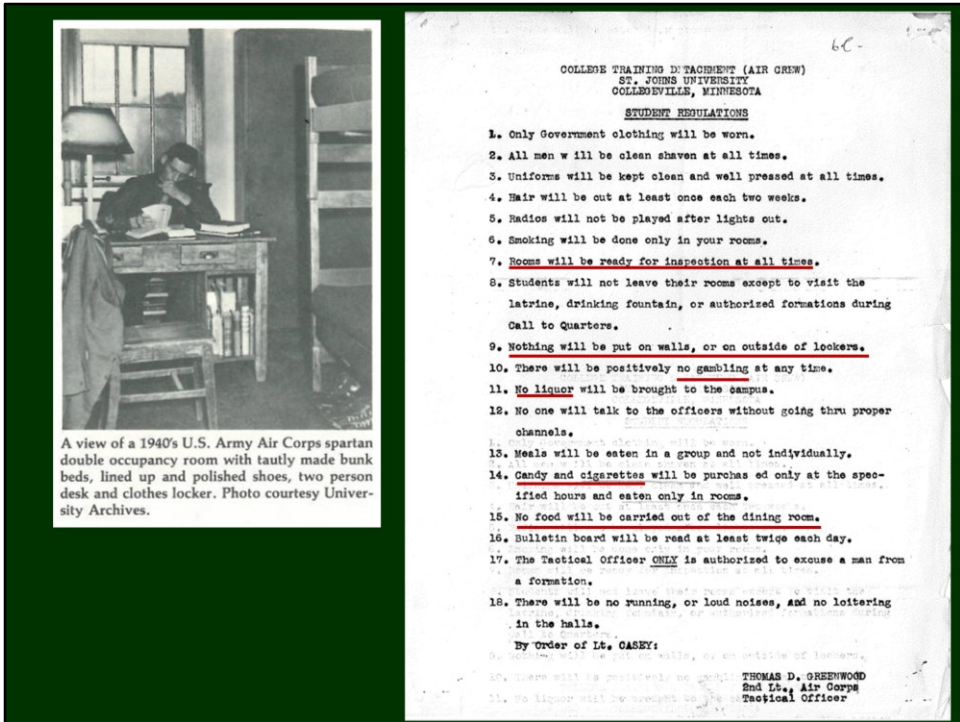
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By Order of Lt. CASEY:

THOMAS D. GREENWOOD
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Tactical Officer

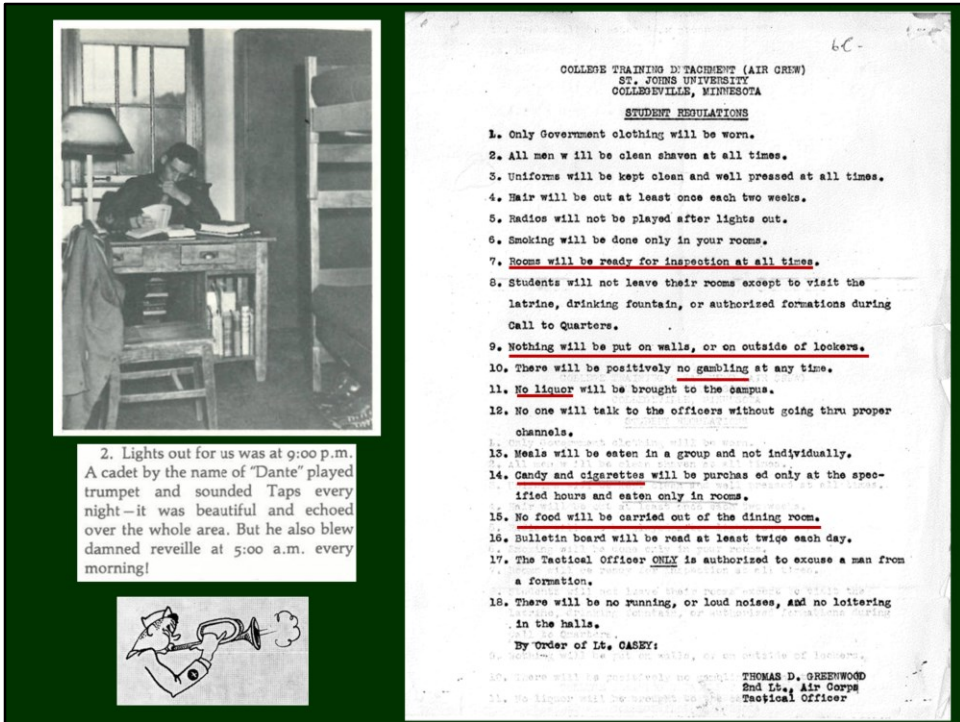
Text: Anthony Bommarito, "Wartime Cadet Remembers Saint John's," *Abbey Quarterly* Winter 1990 p.8
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/19693/rec/1>
List from the SJU Archives: O:\...\Digital Archives\Depts&Programs\Army Air Force\1801f2 StudentRegulations.pdf



On left: Anthony Bommarito, "Wartime Cadet Remembers Saint John's," *Abbey Quarterly* Spring 1990 p.5

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/19716/rec/2>

List from the SJU Archives: O:\...\Digital Archives\Depts&Programs\Army Air Force\1801f2 StudentRegulations.pdf



On left: Anthony Bommarito, "Wartime Cadet Remembers Saint John's," *Abbey Quarterly* Spring 1990 p.5
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/19716/rec/2>
 List from the SJU Archives: O:\...\Digital Archives\Depts&Programs\Army Air Force\1801f2 StudentRegulations.pdf

3. [In times for academic instruction] . . . we divided in "Flights" of about 30 men and marched to classes in formation. We are at attention until the student officer in charge saluted the instructor and gave the command, "At Ease." This was difficult for some of the Fathers, to return the salute—some didn't.



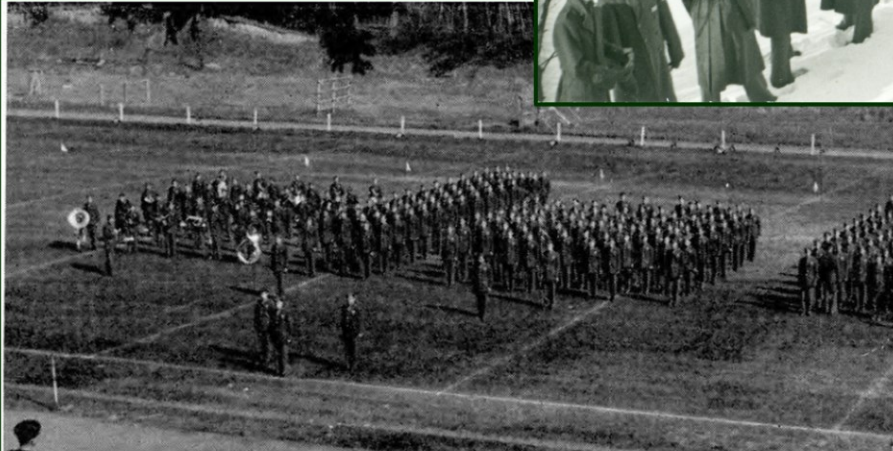
1944 *Sagatagan*, p.67

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18472/rec/24>

Text: Anthony Bommarito, "Wartime Cadet Remembers Saint John's," *Abbey Quarterly* Winter 1990 p.8

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/19693/rec/1>

4. Our training was intense. Free time was from about 3 o'clock Saturday to noon on Sunday. If we went into Saint Cloud or Saint Joseph, we had to be back by lunchtime Sunday because of Sunday afternoon parade on the grounds; Sunday evening we were at our studies.



MARCHING—in review before Capt. Casey, Father Abbot, Lts. Mosiman, Green and Greenwood on the football field; the students found this an interesting substitute for the regular Saturday football games; when these pictures were taken another Flight "F" was about to leave.

Lower image and caption from 1944 *Sagatagan*, p.66

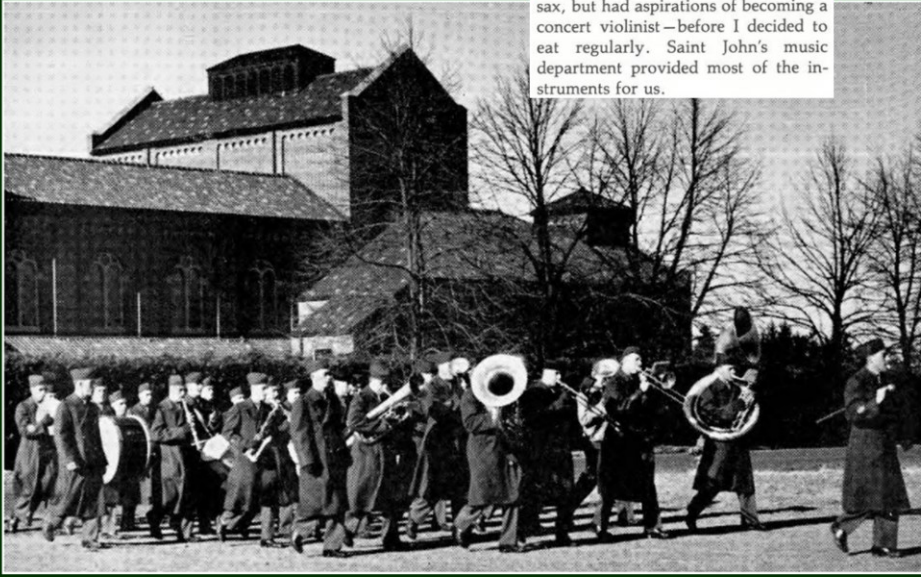
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Inset image from the SJU Archives, O:\...\Depts&Programs\ROTC\Army Air Force 1940s Box1803f5_Scan3.jpg

Text: Anthony Bommarito, "Wartime Cadet Remembers Saint John's," *Abbey Quarterly* Winter 1990 p.8

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/19693/rec/1>

5. In our 300 cadet contingent, there was exceptional musical talent; many had played professionally before entry into the service. I played clarinet and sax, but had aspirations of becoming a concert violinist – before I decided to eat regularly. Saint John's music department provided most of the instruments for us.



1944 *Sagatagan*, p.74

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18476/rec/24>

Text: Anthony Bommarito, "Wartime Cadet Remembers Saint John's," *Abbey Quarterly* Winter 1990 p.8

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/19693/rec/1>

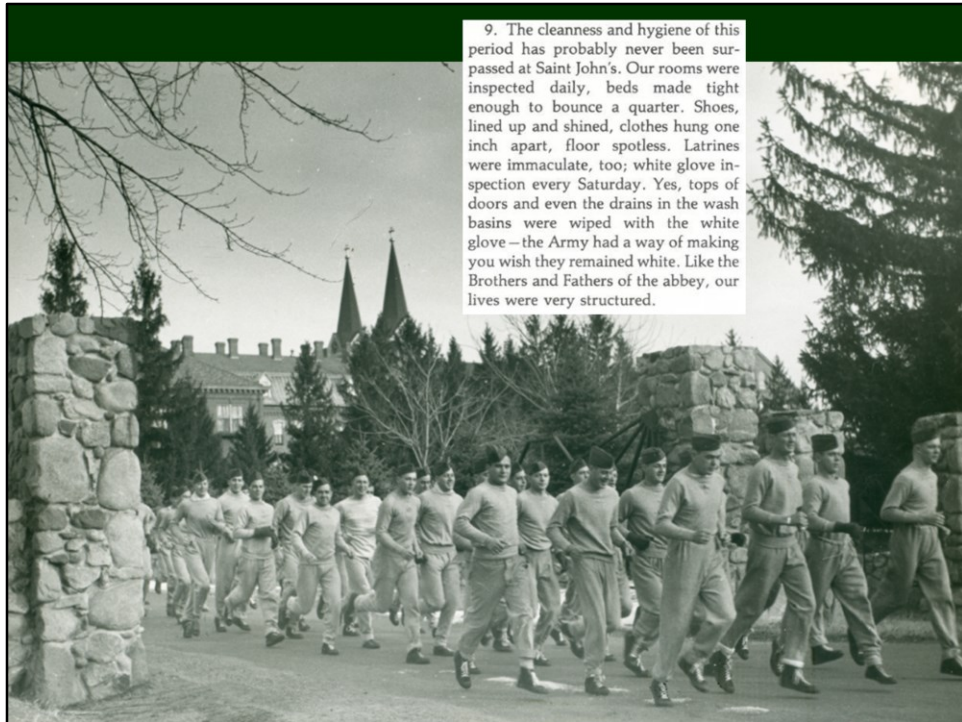


1944 *Sagatagan*, p.72,

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18474/rec/24>

Text: Anthony Bommarito, “Wartime Cadet Remembers Saint John’s,” *Abbey Quarterly* Spring 1990 p.5

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/19716/rec/2>



9. The cleanness and hygiene of this period has probably never been surpassed at Saint John's. Our rooms were inspected daily, beds made tight enough to bounce a quarter. Shoes, lined up and shined, clothes hung one inch apart, floor spotless. Latrines were immaculate, too; white glove inspection every Saturday. Yes, tops of doors and even the drains in the wash basins were wiped with the white glove—the Army had a way of making you wish they remained white. Like the Brothers and Fathers of the abbey, our lives were very structured.

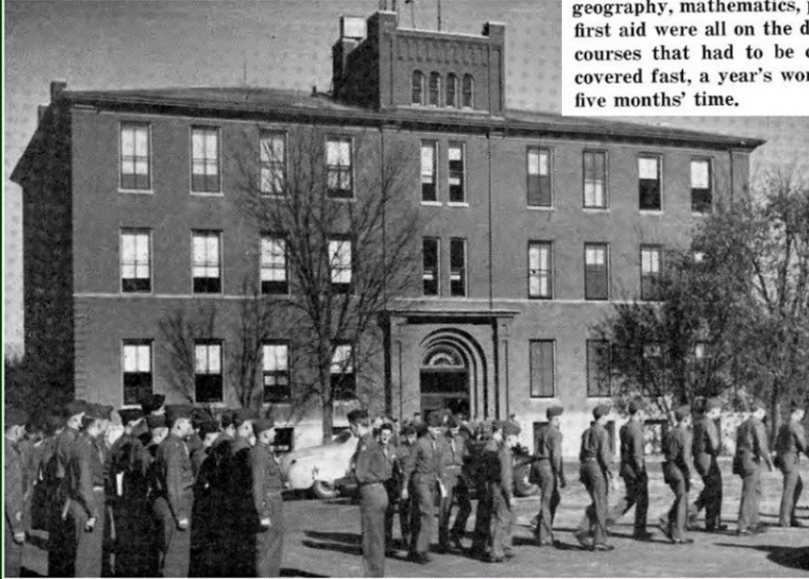
1944 *Sagatagan*, p.64-65

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18471/rec/24>

Bottom photo published in 1944 *Sagatagan*, p.70-71,

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18474/rec/24>; this version is from the SJU Archives, O:\...\Depts&Programs\ROTC\Army Air Force Army Air Force 1940s Box1803f5_Photo D Pg 246.jpg

This was no snap course the Air Corps was giving its future pilots; English, history, geography, mathematics, physics, and first aid were all on the day's slate—courses that had to be covered and covered fast, a year's work in two to five months' time.




Aviation Students marching to and from classes in the Science Hall, where the Physics classes recited.


Image & caption from 1944 *Sagatagan*, p.61

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18469/rec/24>

Text from p. 59-60



July 19 -		CLASS SCHEDULE		Class D		Flight 1		AVIATION STUDENTS		1943	
	0800-0850	0900-0950	1000-1050	1100-1150	1300-1350	1400-1450	1500-1550	1600-1650	1700	1750	
MONDAY	Physics M 33 Fr. Matthew	English M 11 Fr. Sylvester	Phy. Lab S 14 Fr. Matthew	Phy. Lab S 14 Fr. Matthew	Math M 21 Fr. Gilbert	History M 24 Farley	Physical Training			Drill	
TUESDAY	Physics M 33 Fr. Matthew	Pub. Speak. A 11 Fr. Dominic	Phy. Lab S 14 Fr. Matthew	Phy. Lab S 14 Fr. Matthew	Math M 21 Fr. Gilbert	Geography A 11 Corfield	Drill			Physical Training	
WEDNESDAY	Interior Guard M 12 Lt. Green	English M 11 Fr. Sylvester	Phy. Lab S 14 Fr. Matthew	Phy. Lab S 14 Fr. Matthew	Math M 21 Fr. Gilbert	History M 24 Farley	Physical Training			Drill	
THURSDAY	Physics M 33 Fr. Matthew	Pub. Spk. A 11 Fr. Dominic	Geography A 11 Corfield	Int. Guard M 12 Lt. Green	Math M 21 Fr. Gilbert	Geography A 11 Corfield	Drill			Physical Training	
FRIDAY	Physics M 33 Fr. Matthew	English M 11 Fr. Sylvester	Physics S 14 Fr. Matthew	Physics S 14 Fr. Matthew	Math M 21 Fr. Gilbert	History M 24 Farley	Physical Training			Drill	
SATURDAY											



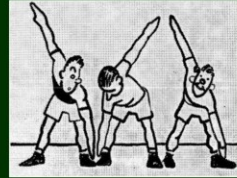
Aviation Students marching to and from classes in the Science Hall, where the Physics classes recited.

Image & caption from 1944 *Sagatagan*, p.61

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18469/rec/24>

Schedule from the SJU Archives: O:\...\Digital Archives\Depts&Programs\Army Air Force\1772f8 AviationStudentSchedules.pdf

However, classes only consumed party of the day; George Durenberger and Joe Benda, besides teaching first aid, had to see that cadets were put through a few stiff periods of Physical Training. During the summer the fledglings ran the obstacle course set up on the Johnny gridiron; in winter PT was held in the gym, or outside on skates and skis.



PHYSICAL TRAINING—or “PT” as it was called, may not have been the aviation students’ idea of a good time, but there is no doubt that Durenberger and Benda and Luckemeyer did not let up until their men had reached the physical fitness that won such high praise later.

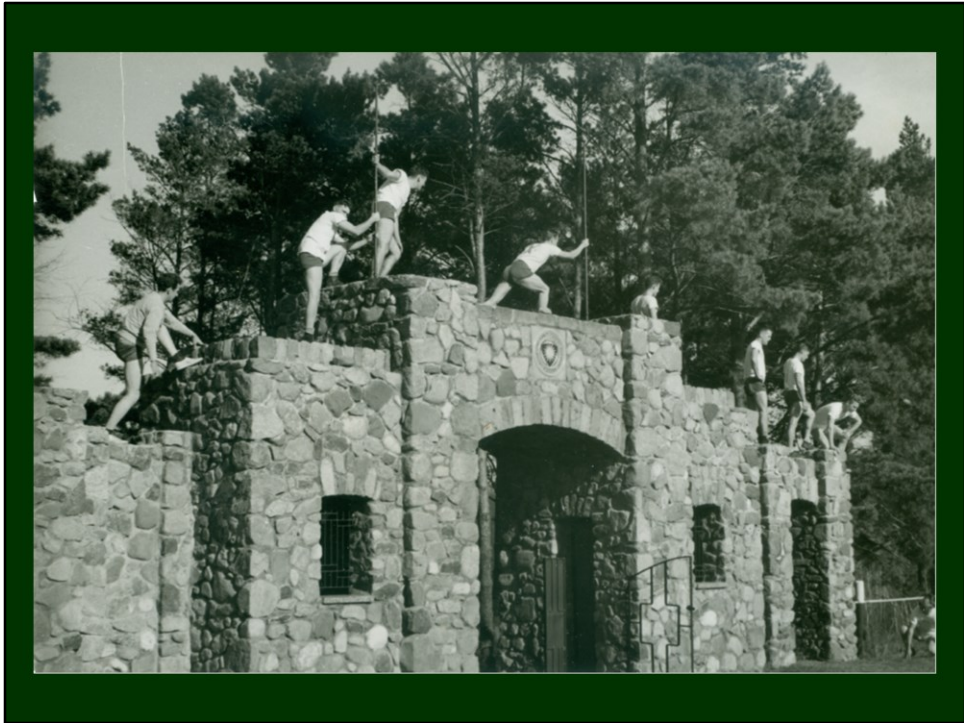
Photo and caption from 1944 *Sagatagan*, p.70-71

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18474/rec/24>

Upper text from p. 60.



SJU Archives Ascheman (sesquicentennial) collection, LP128.1936.StadiumEnt.jpg.



From the SJU Archives, O:\...\Depts&Programs\ROTC\Army Air Force Army Air Force
1940s Box1803f5_Scan1.jpg



Returning from a hard drill.

Up and down the roads around the buildings, student officers led squads to the lusty singing of "I've Been Workin' on the Railroad," and "The Air Corps Song." It was hard work, this learning to be a pilot, but with the goal kept in mind time seemed to fly. Taps sounded at 22:00, and the old double bunks looked good.

1944 *Sagatagan*, p.65

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18471/rec/24>

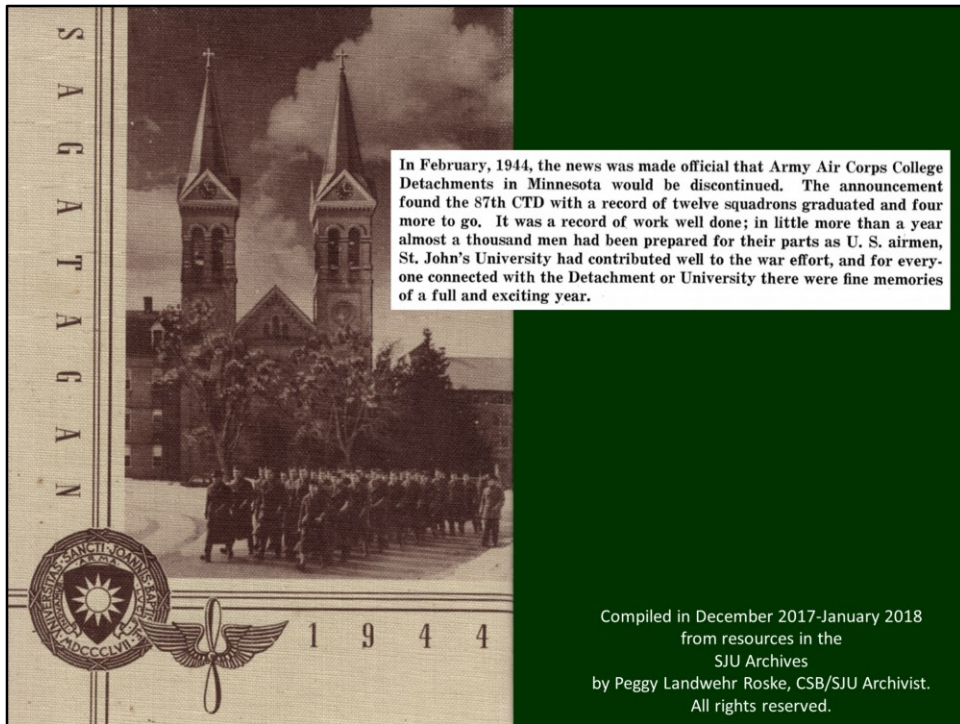


Image: 1944 *Sagatagan*, front cover,

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18439/rec/24>

Text: 1944 *Sagatagan*, p. 63

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/18470/rec/24>