WIL-CO: World War II Air Force Cadets at Saint John’s as documented in The Record

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.
Much of the February 25, 1943 issue's front page concerned the arrival of the soldiers-in-training.
Servicemen alumni also featured prominently in that issue’s four-page Alumni Supplement, which also had this announcement.
A Soldier Student

By Pvt. Charles Woodruff

To every soldier at St. John’s an impression is given of something worthwhile, something new. To us this is an unusually valuable opportunity. Many have never attended a college or university. These men, who from lack of money, chance, or by quirk of circumstances were barred from the essentially important experience of going to college, appreciate keenly the chance to be “Johnnies.” They feel already that which many have felt before—the closeness men feel when they are studying, working, living together—the so-called college atmosphere.

These soldiers will listen more intently and spend more time over their textbooks striving to narrow the gap between themselves and those who were more favored.

The men who have attended college before appreciate St. John’s in a different way. The fact that our instructors are all highly educated, the best that can be found, means a great deal. We will not be listening to “second best” or earnest graduate assistants. We will have access not only to the best that American education can offer, but also to the teachings of the great universities of Europe. For many of our teachers have studied not only here in the United States, but also abroad. This is something new to all of us.

St. John’s university is complete in every way. An essential part of any college or university is a library. The Johnnies boast of a 70,000 volume library which includes modern, up-to-the-minute reference books, newspapers, magazines, reading and study rooms which, if used, will play an important part in any soldier’s life here.

The 2,000 acre campus has everything necessary to make St. John’s a complete unit in itself. We have been told that communication with the rest of the world could be shut off for one month—and we would not suffer for it. Light and water systems, farm and dairy; these are but a few of the units belonging to the school. Sports of every kind are available—hockey, skiing, tobogganing, and all other winter sports. In the summer there is swimming, boating, and any of the things we on Californians enjoyed with the exception of swimming in the ocean. A complete sports calendar is a feature of St. John’s.

Already athletic competition has arisen between the army and St. John’s. A basketball team has been organized among the soldiers, and games with the Johnnies have been scheduled. Both groups are beginning to realize the value of this opportunity for practice, conditioning, and fun. Friendships are starting between those West Coast boys and the St. John’s students.

In the few days we have spent at St. John’s, we have already been given things to remember for the rest of our lives. Looking from our high windows over the vastness of the campus, we feel something wholesome and worthwhile. We are literally on top of the world—our world for quite some time to come. Chimos that signal the quarter hour, that tell us the time, are music to our ears and will be heard long after we leave St. John’s. We are beginning to feel the friendliness and the spirit of this school. To many soldiers, St. John’s will be an alma mater—and we all want to add to our inherent traditions of the Army Air Corps the Johnny traditions and the Johnny spirit. We will be the richer by acquiring them. Also, we would like to have some traditions of our own—traditions of fellowship and camaraderie. We want to be remembered as the first and finest.

St. John’s, with its air of quiet culture and sincere endeavor, gives each soldier a goal toward which he will strive. Our scope of life, our understanding of our fellow men, is being broadened for both now and for the future. All things have become more pleasant in every way. “Ghou” is no longer a somewhat unpleasant but thrice daily must, it’s a real pleasure! One soldier was told at the infirmary, “my Johnnies aren’t supposed to get hurt after sick call.” A little shibb, perhaps, but quite different from the usual G.I. opinion of sprained ankles.

We look forward to the things we will experience and have during our stay. Our classes under the black-robbed Fathers will be pleasantly valuable opportunities. Many soldiers will pledge their mortality specializing in bull sessions. There is no danger of our becoming ivory-towered, carrion-worn men. We are impressed even now with gratitude for St. John’s.
The March 25, 1943 issue, page 3:

**College War Service News**

The U.S. Marines will call their reservists about July 1, 1943, to active duty as privates in the Marine Corps Reserve. They will then be assigned to an active duty status and will continue their studies at colleges selected by the Navy.

College freshmen and sophomores will be required to qualify for additional study through a general intelligence test. Scholastic standing in college, probable aptitudes, and recommendations of the college authorities will be given consideration in the selection.

Students who have one term or less to complete for a degree may remain on inactive status in the colleges they are now attending, unless they are required earlier for military training, or the students request active duty and assignment to a college.

Assignment of Marine students will be based upon economy in the use of transportation facilities and the course of study now being pursued.

**Army Reserves**

The U.S. Army ERC reservists in pre-medical, pre-dental, and engineering courses are expected to be called to active duty about June 1, 1943.

It seems that pre-medical and pre-dental students will not be required to interrupt their schooling for basic military training. Students will be selected for flight training. Selected high school graduates will be sent to college for two terms as apprentice seamen before being assigned to aviation training.

V-F students who have more than one term to complete for a degree will be placed on active duty and ordered to colleges under contract to the navy. Those V-F students who have one term or less to complete for a degree may remain on inactive duty in the college they are now attending, or may request active duty assignment to a college selected by the navy.

* * * * *

In all instances, students in any navy program who do not, in any term, make the average required for graduation will be assigned to other duty, probably at sea. The army and the Marine services likewise will call their reservists to active duty in another status if these do not maintain the average (C at St. John's) required for graduation.

**Army Air Corps**

Aviation cadet training in the U.S. army air force is now open to men between the ages of 18 and 26 who can qualify for assignment to air crew training as pilots, navigators, or bombardiers.

Those who qualify will be given a letter to the commanding officer of the local recruiting station about their qualification.
March 25, 1943: The Record devoted all of the last page to the cadets:

“This Is The Army”

To Build Substantially And Grow Naturally - We Experiment

In keeping with our experimental status and our tradition of being best, we hereby inaugurate this page. No other corresponding air crew group has, to our knowledge, a column, page, paper, or news outlet of any kind. We are starting in a humble way, wishing to build substantially and grow naturally. It is our hope that we may continue to grow and that our efforts will be appreciated and continued by each succeeding group of air crew students stationed at St. John’s University.

Our students will be those to publish material which is of greatest interest to the enlisted men here, to be informative and helpful, to be entertaining, and to encourage members to write. This is our purpose. Its aim is to serve you.

The first page of the Record very much resembles the type of a hastily gathered staff. There will be errors, we know. It is hoped that they will be forgiven, and we assure all writers everywhere that any plagiarism is purely unintentional.

The reason for starting this ‘Record’ venture is many and varied. Every man here wants the detachment at St. John’s to be the finest of its kind in America. This is understood by all of us. We want to be outstanding and feel it is everything. “First and foremost” shall be our slogan in all that we do, either singly or as a group. Therefore it is only fitting that we, and not our instructors, inaugurate this paper.

Our parents, naturally, though it may seem, worry about us. They are right. And we must try to live harmoniously and happily. It is hard to have the things we are interested in. They are usually the little things that we cannot tolerate. We want them filled and never forget. Moreover, we’re too busy to worry about it now. But we are working comfortably here. We want to thank our instructors for their general help and advice to Private Joe Dudas and his buddies in order to help us.

You can now see our reasons for the Ventures. Probably you can think of some other reasons that have not been mentioned. There are many possibilities for a page of this kind may or may not be used, so tell us about them. In the meantime we will try to keep Private Joe informed and entertained.

Basketball Begins Recreational Activities For Air Crew Men

Inter-flight basketball is being forced off the floor by 10 intramural teams. The playoffs are scheduled to start Monday morning, March 25, and if all goes well, they’ll be over by the 27th. The best teams will have finals on the same day, for two games are to be played simultaneously in the short court. The results should be very interesting.

The writer of these lines is Mr. George Duraszewski, Exterior Affairs Director at St. John’s University. He is writing for the Record. The writer, George, is very much appreciated by all cadets, and we hope it is the first time that the many possible success programs to be organized.

1943-03-25
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection-CSBArchNews/id/29567
To Build Substantially
And Grow Naturally-We Experiment

In keeping with our experimental status and our tradition of being first, we hereby inaugurate this page. No other corresponding air crew group has, to our knowledge, a column, page, paper, or news outlet of any kind. We are starting in a humble way, wishing to build substantially and grow naturally. It is our hope that we may continue to grow and that our efforts will be appreciated and continued by each succeeding group of air crew students stationed at St. John’s University.

Our standards will be these: to publish that material which is of greatest interest to the enlisted men here, to be informative and beneficial, to be accurate in news reporting, and strive for perfection in writing. This is our paper, its purpose is to serve you!
The reasons for starting this journalistic venture are many and varied. Every man here wants the detachment at St. John’s to be the finest of its kind in America. This is understood by all of us. We want to be outstanding and first in everything. “First and finest” shall be our slogan in all that we do, either singly or as a group. Therefore it is only fitting that we, and not our followers, inaugurate this paper.

Our parents, curious though it may seem, worry about us. They are interested in our every activity. Our letters are too often hastily written and skimpy. It is hard to know the things that are of interest to them—they're usually the little things that we accept as too commonplace to write about and soon forget. Moreover, we’re too busy and too active to sit down and write a long comforting letter home. We want to compile in our news all the general duties and activities of Private Joe Doakes and his buddies in order to enlighten both Private Joe and his parents.
ATTENTION PLEASE

“This is the army” is definitely not an appropriate name for this page. We borrowed the temporary title from Irving Berlin’s show of the same name. This page is yours, and it’s your job to name it. If the experiment is successful, if you like it, there is the possibility of enlargement. We welcome any and all suggestions for improvement.

But first we must have a name for our page—we can best judge your approval of our efforts by the number of names turned in. If we get 150 names we’ll know that you want to have a page, and perhaps a paper of your own. If the response is light, we’ll know that you don’t particularly care and will abandon the idea. So it’s up to you! Leave your suggestions for a name for our page in rooms 401 and 243, just anywhere at any time. Print your suggestion, your full name, and your room number on the paper.

At the present time there are only three men on the staff. There are openings for a news editor, a sports editor, a feature editor, columnists, and writers of all kinds. A business manager is also needed. If you have had experience in these lines or are interested, contact Pvt. Chuck Woodruff, room 401, or Pvt. Jack Webb, room 243.

1943-03-25
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29567
By the next issue, April 8, 1943, the back page had been renamed to

WILCO

THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 1943

...and this, at the bottom of the page (repeated in the September 30, 1943 issue), was offered by way of explanation.

Wil-Co -- The Winnah!!

“B for Benny twenty-nine to tower, B for Benny twenty-nine to tower. Asking permission to take-off. Over.”

“Tower to B for Benny twenty-nine, tower to B for Benny twenty-nine. Permission granted. Prepare to take-off.”

“B for Benny twenty-nine, WIL-CO, Over.”

Such might be the two-way conversation between a plane and the radio tower. Radio has become an essential factor in flying, and along with it has come radio’s own jargon. Messages must be short, clipped, and readily understood under the most trying conditions. So it is from this cant that the name for the post paper is derived. Private Richard Wahl of Flight B submitted the winning name. In the words of Private Wahl, “You fellows said that your idea was to put out a paper that would comply with our wishes: to carry news to those at home and to bring us news of the campus. In other words, you will comply, or wil-co.”

Lieutenant Greenwood, Tactical Officer, rewarded Private Wahl with a carton of cigarettes. The editors of the newly named “Wil-co” express their gratitude to Private Wahl for an excellent and appropriate title. We thank the men of the Detachment for the large number of names that were sent in and their splendid spirit of cooperation.

April 8, 1943  http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29578
September 30, 1943
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29540
However, the next issue, May 6, 1943, p. 1, noted the demise of the WIL-CO:

Communique no. 96747378 from the West Coast Gulf Command issued to all college’s training army pre-pre-flight students: “We deem it inadvisable for Air Corps students to participate in collegiate publications for academic reasons.” And so died Wil-Co. We Recordmen and readers express our appreciation to the members of the Wil-Co staff for their interesting and amusing contributions.

Despite the announcement of its demise in May, and for reasons not explained, publication of the “WIL-CO” back page resumed in the first issue in the fall, September 30, 1943. It continued in most, though not every, issue, appearing over a dozen times during its 1943 and 1944 run:

| 1943-03-25 | 1944-01-20 |
| 1943-04-08 | 1944-02-10 |
| 1943-09-30 | 1944-02-24 |
| 1943-10-14 | 1944-03-16 |
| 1943-10-28 | 1944-04-20 |
| 1943-11-18 | 1944-05-04 |
| 1943-12-16 |            |
Even when “WIL-CO” wasn’t part of a Record issue, there was a lot of coverage of Johnnie servicemen.

Service Flag Hung

A new service flag recently hung on the wall of the passageway between the chapel and the main building reveals the large number of St. John’s alumni who are now in the armed forces of the United States army, navy, and the marines. At present the total number is 1018 men, of which 629 are in the army, 326 in the navy, 46 in the Marines, 8 in the Coast Guard, 4 in the Merchant Marine, and 2 in the Royal Canadian Air Forces.

Additional statistics show that fifteen Johnnies have already given their lives as a supreme sacrifice in this war.

Fifty-four per cent of all the Johnnies are commissioned officers.

Sept. 30, 1943, p.1

(on band) 1943-12-16
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29509
(on flag) 1943-09-30 (p.1)
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29540
A new service flag recently hung on the wall of the passageway between the chapel and the main building reveals the large number of St. John’s alumni who are now in the armed forces of the United States army, navy and the marines. At present the total number is 1018 men, of which 629 are in the army, 336 in the navy, 46 in the Marines, 8 in the Coast Guard, 4 in the Merchant Marine, and 2 in the Royal Canadian Air Forces.

Additional statistics show that fifteen Johnnies have already given their lives as a supreme sacrifice in this war.

Fifty-four per cent of all the Johnnies are commissioned officers.
Graduation Exercises Held April 10

Father Abbot Gives Address At Special Graduation Exercises

Graduation exercises were held for the group of men transferring to the army ground or service forces last Sunday evening. The Rt. Rev. Abbot Alcuin Deutsch, president of St. John’s University, honored the group by delivering the graduation address, and also presented the certificates of appointment to those student commissioned and non-commissioned officers included.

1944-04-20
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29588
Father Gilbert Winkelmann, O.S.B., professor of mathematics for the Air Crew at St. John’s is shown holding his giant seven-foot slide rule, bought to facilitate classroom instruction in the 87th C.T.D.’s academic program.

1943-11-18
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29499
A-S Hawley Winds Up Wil-Co

And now that all my other work
take recently, and came back
done I can see what to do about
red-faced but with a nice-sized
this so-called gossip column. My
position as editor of the Wil-co
Others did not have quite so
has been only of limited duration,
but it was fun while it lasted,
even if a little work.

As the 5th swings into the
home stretch all the boys seem
to be turning over a new leaf, or
several leaves. There just isn't
enough dirt

I guess we
Zederad tied
example
in the
Flight boys
him. And we
mention Pit,
quizzical mark.
It was too
so Sgt. W. J.
cigarette has
received a too
the birth of
proud papa!
But the not
been up to
man spent
the May on the
with some meaning now.

And so for once and for all I
wind up the gossip, and along
with it Wil-co. St. John's has
been a lot of fun, along with the
hard work, and I'm surely going
to miss it. After the war, God
granting, I shall return and re-
visit all the spots. Let's hope the
duration is a short one. Good-
bye, and thanks for a swell time.

WIL-\CO

STAFF

Editor.........A-S R. G. Hawley, Sr.
Reporter.........A-S J. Cole

WIL-\CO

STAFF

Editor.........A-S R. G. Hawley, Sr.
Reporter.........A-S J. Cole

The last “WIL-CO” appeared in
the May 4, 1944 issue,
with this sign-off

No Hawley photo!
Johnny Cadets Say

Thanks In Parting

As April showers chase each other across the land, and the grass turns green on lawns and fields, the realization comes to us that one of the most pleasant chapters of our lives as air corps cadets is about to come to a close.

When we first arrived at Collegeville, it seemed as if we might have come to the end of the world. However, it was with surprise and a pleasant sense of anticipation that we saw the Johnny bus and the Detachment Band at the station to greet the new arrivals. And subsequent events have more than borne out the promise of that arrival.

A word of thanks must also be given to the Sisters who prepared our meals for us. Even after almost five months here we are still amazed at, but very thankful for, such food.

But as fast as we put on weight from one source, George, Joe, and Gus were busy taking it off with a P. T. program that ranks high in the C.T.D.’s in the nation. We’ll miss those runs around the lake, or cross country.
Wil-Co = "Will Comply"

Acronym explained
“Roger” By Pvt. Bob Woolf
By way of introducing this column, it is highly appropriate to
include the following poem which was
written by an NCO of the 502d Parachute
Regiment and has been published in several
publications. We believe it is one of the best
poems ever written on the subject of parachuting.

“Put your feet into the air,
And you’ll find life is a lot of fun.
Put your feet into the air,
And you’ll find life is a lot of fun.

“Put your feet into the air,
And you’ll find life is a lot of fun.
Put your feet into the air,
And you’ll find life is a lot of fun.”

In Caddence—

H’Exercise

How About You?

By Pvt. Jack Webb
Each week at the same time
we shall endeavor to
present a new and unique
idea which may be
of interest to our readers.

The idea this week is

“Put your feet into the air,
And you’ll find life is a lot of fun.
Put your feet into the air,
And you’ll find life is a lot of fun.”

 Gus, Rogers Old Army Train.”
Roger =
“Reception Ok,
Go ahead!”
“Wil-Co” is explained again that fall, in the 1943-09-30 Record

***What’s In A Name***

"B for Benny twenty-nine to tower. Asking permission to take off. Over."
"Tower to B for Benny twenty-nine, tower to B for Benny twenty-nine. Permission granted. Prepare to take off."
"B for Benny twenty-nine, WIL-CO. Over."

Such might be the two-way conversation between a plane and the radio tower. Radio has become an essential factor in flying, and along with it has come radio's own jargon. Messages must be short, clipped, and readily understood under the most trying conditions.

So it is from this cast that the name for the past paper is derived. Private Richard Wahl of California submitted the name. In the words of Private Wahl, “You fellows said that your Idea was to put out a paper that would supply with our wishes to carry the news to these at home and to bring us the news of the campus. In other words, you will keep or, WIL-Co.”

It’s to be strictly G. I., nothing S.N.A.F.U., and so we would like to make this plea to any of the men of the detachment who have had any newspaper experience, professional or amateur, to submit articles for publication and to join our staff. Any suggestion about Wil-Co’s make-up or contents will be greatly appreciated.

---

1943-09-30, The Record p.4
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29543
1943-09-30, The Record p.4
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29543
In the Oct. 14, 1943 issue, “SNAFU” has become a regular column:

S.N.A.F.U.

Judging from many of the physics grades, an addition of some of the I.Q.'s would result in something that resembles the score of a good hockey game. Keep it up, Men. With those and a nickel you can get a good cup of coffee at any of the B.T.C.'s.

Likewise in the Oct. 28, 1943 issue:

“Little Abner” Carter received cieny said, “Bury him.” At least his certificate of merit from the Cesino’s mind isn’t cluttered up by a Junior Birdman of America, but he lot of externals. Those high wire

1943-10-14 http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29573
1943-10-28 http://cd.m.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29603
“SNAFU” (“Situation Normal: All F*ed/Fouled Up”), a slang expression of US military origin” (Snafu - Wikipedia)
1943-09-30, The Record p.4
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29543
1943-09-30, The Record p.4
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29543
Inset from 1943-10-14, The Record
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/29573