



Appendix G



LET'S KEEP ARMOR O.C.S.

Captain Thomas J. Canavan, Jr., AOAC-1

In mid-August 1967 the Armor Officer Candidate Brigade received instructions not to admit any more candidates. These instructions came as a surprise to most and a disappointment to many. It was determined by The Department of the Army that the number of newly commissioned officers, from all the officer candidate schools, would have to be reduced. To adequately accommodate this reduction, five of the eight officer candidate schools would be phased-out. Armor O.C.S. was, once again, being shut-down.

The Armor School had its first class of officer candidates during the Second World War. It was 1 July 1941 when 231 candidates reported for a 13 week program. (2:46) The barracks that they reported to are the same barracks on Third Avenue that house the present candidates.

In the beginning, the frequency of classes was one every three weeks until October 1942. After that, classes began every week. This pace was maintained until July 1943 when the program was cut back. However, in January 1943 the program reached its peak with 13 classes consisting of 3496 candidates and 576 cadre. (2:46)

The classes that began after July 1943 received a 17 week course instead of the original 13 week course. The program continued this way until it was deactivated on 1 September 1946. During this World War II period, some 12,000 men received their commissions at Fort Knox from candidate classes that varied in number depending on the needs of the government. (2:47)

It was not until 28 September 1951 that Fort Knox saw the officer candidate program again. Its reactivation was due to the Korean Conflict and a rising need for young officers. This time the candidates were housed just north of the Armor School in renovated wooden buildings. (2:47)

The program was to consist of 11 classes with 100 candidates per class. This time, however, they were to receive 22 weeks of training--a five week increase over World War II O.C.S. In addition, a class was to graduate every other week. At first these goals were not reached. The first three classes had more than 100 candidates and started about one month apart. It was not until the fourth class that the Officer Candidate School was able to proceed as planned. The program was retained at Fort Knox until 12 May 1953, during which time 1,256 Armor lieutenants received commissions. (3:2)

In 1965, The United States became deeply involved in an armed conflict in South Vietnam and began sending combat units to that country to assist the Army of South Vietnam. This involvement, once again, increased our need for young officers. On 13 September 1965 the Officer Candidate Program was again reactivated at Fort Knox.

The present program is 23 weeks in duration, and the Armor School has the capability of training 16 classes of about 110 candidates each. As during World War II and the Korean Conflict, the program required some time to get moving. It was not until 9 December 1965 that the first class could start due to a lack of sufficient candidates. By the middle of January 1966, the program was moving as originally planned, and new classes were beginning every week.

There were two training phases for the first 16 classes. Phase I, 13 weeks long, consisted of branch immaterial subjects and leadership training. Phase II, 10 weeks long, was for those that were to be commissioned in Armor. It consisted of tank gunnery and armored tactics training, only to mention a couple of areas, and more leadership training. There were only five of the first 16 classes that remained at Fort Knox for Phase II training. The other 11 classes moved to the branch school of their choice for the remaining 10 weeks of training.

Since July 1966 all the classes have been Armor. In the fall of 1966 there were 16 classes in session and the number decreased to 14 early in 1967. The classes have been steadily decreasing since August 1967 when word was received to phase-out Armor O.C.S. However, during the period from 9 December 1965 to 2 November 1967 Fort Knox O.C.S. has commissioned some 2,800 lieutenants. (4)

In comparing the present Armor O.C.S. program with those, of the past there are four main differences.

1. The length of the program during World War II was only 13 weeks long then it increased to 17 weeks. The Korean Conflict program was 22 weeks and now the present program is 23 weeks in length.

2. The attrition rate during World War II O.C.S. was about 25%, (2:47) and the biggest portion was due to academic failures. The majority of the candidates' training was spent on academics. The volume of material presented, coupled with a short time span, proved to be disastrous for many of the candidates. This was not the case in later programs. The attrition rate during the Korean Conflict was 35% to 40%, but only two percent was attributed to academic failure. (2:47) The present programs' attrition rate is about 22% with academics accounting for about one percent. (4) The inability to demonstrate adequately leadership traits is the cause for most of today's attrition, while the lack of proper motivation to complete the program was the cause for most of the Korean Conflict attrition. (2:47)

3. The age of today's candidate averages 21.67 years old compared with that of 22.92 years old (2:47) for those candidates during the Korean Conflict.

4. The education of the candidates during the Korean Conflict averaged 13.57 years. (2:47) Today's candidates average 14.02 years of education. (4)

Why phase out Armor O.C.S. again? It takes a long time to get a program of this nature on its feet once it has been stowed away. Armor continuously needs new lieutenants, and Armor O.C.S. is the way we can train our own. The military academies and R.O.T.C. will continue to provide Armor with lieutenants, but additional men always come from officer candidate schools to fulfill the lieutenant requirement.

Armor has approximately 2,500 lieutenants on active duty today. (1:13). The present strength of Armor officers is about 76% of that authorized, (1:13) and from this it can be assumed that there are still many authorized positions for lieutenants not filled. Maybe all of these positions will never be filled, but why cut down on our output!

To reactivate the present Officer Candidate School at Fort Knox cost approximately two million dollars. This included the renovation of barracks, mess halls, and additional classrooms; also, the purchase of bunks, desks, chairs, and dayroom furniture. (5) It can be assumed that the activation and reactivation of the program during World War II and the Korean Conflict must have been of a comparative figure.

To operate a unit of this type requires experienced men. Officer Candidate School is conducted differently than most units in the service; therefore, experience is hard to find. After much research, the initial leaders of the present O.C.S. were able to provide outstanding guidance to those that followed, but there were many times that various situations had to be "felt out" due to a lack of experience. If the program continued at Fort Knox, this would not be the case.

It is understandable that the Army does not need the number of newly commissioned officers on a continuous basis, which it has received over the last two years. However, other officer candidate schools are not phasing out completely, and it is felt that Armor O.C.S., at least in part, should stay. This would enable the Army to save money on reactivating again sometime in the future, and consistency could be maintained with experienced cadre.

Why not just cut down on the number of classes? Four to six classes, of about 100 candidates each could be accommodated very easily. The cadre required to train this number of candidates would not have to be very large, and the Armor School could adequately provide the academic instruction. Each letter company would maintain the same amount of cadre, eight officers and four non-commissioned officers. The number of personnel in Brigade Headquarters could be reduced in number, at least, in the drill and command section due to the reduction in the number of classes. In any case, a program of this size would provide Armor about 500 new lieutenants annually, and they would all be 100% Armor oriented. Also, it would induce our young enlisted leaders to apply for O.C.S. especially if they knew for sure they would be commissioned in Armor.

Another solution to keep Armor O.C.S. at Fort Knox could be to conduct an Armor Phase II for those candidates attending the program at Fort Benning and are to be commissioned in Armor. If this system were to be used, O.C.S. would remain at Fort Knox, experienced cadre would be continuously available, the candidates would become well indoctrinated in Armor,

and new lieutenants would be available for duty about two months earlier because they would not require the Armor Officer Basic Course. This would also save the Army money.

Then again, a combination of the above may be the answer. Keep two to four classes in session for the full 23 weeks. This would provide Armor with about 200 to 400 lieutenants a year. In addition, two to four –Phase II classes could be conducted each year to accommodate those candidates from Fort Benning O.C.S.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Captain Thomas J. Canavan, Jr., was commissioned in 1961 from Norwich University. He graduated from the Armor Officer Basic Course in 1962. He was then assigned to the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor, Fort Carson, Colorado, where he served as a platoon leader, company executive officer, and then as a aide-de-camp to the Assistant Division Commander of the 5th Infantry Division Mechanized. In 1964 he was assigned to the Military Assistance Command Vietnam where he served as a RF/PF Advisor and then as an Assistant Sub-Sector Advisor. In 1965 he returned to CONUS, and became a company commander in The Officer Candidate Brigade prior to attending the Armor Officer Career Course in 1967.

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SUBJECT: Submission of "Article for Publication"

To: Director, General Subjects Department
ATTN: Effective Writing Instructor
US Army Armor School
Fort Knox, Kentucky

1. In accordance with paragraph 1, annex A to supplemental material, "Principles of Effective Writing," enclosed is my article for publication.
2. In the preparation of my article, I have followed requirements as outlined in the afore-referenced annex A. Further, I have included a bibliography of *all* sources that I used in the preparation of my article.
3. My article is submitted to you as a complete article.

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