

Army Air Forces Officer Candidate School During World War II Training of Administrative Officers (Miami Beach)

Although the Army Air Forces (AAF) during the war concentrated its training effort upon flying and technical personnel, it could not ignore the need for qualified administrative officers. When rapid expansion of the air arm began in 1940, the small number of officers assigned to the Air Corps was a serious limitation. Furthermore, the need for qualified rated personnel to perform necessary flying was so critical that the AAF sought to relieve rated officers of nonflying duties wherever possible. This policy could be effected only through procuring and training large numbers of young men for multifarious administrative assignments.

In February 1942 General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold directed the head of the Technical Training Command, Maj. Gen. Walter R. Weaver, to establish an AAF officer candidate school (OCS) at a location of his own choosing. In response to the demand for speedy action, General Weaver went at once to Miami Beach, Florida, and personally supervised the establishment there of the new organization. It remained at Miami Beach until June 1944, when it was transferred to the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center, Texas. In June 1945, only two months before it was suspended, the school was moved to Maxwell Field, Alabama. During the wartime period nearly 30,000 men were graduated from the school.

Officer candidates were selected from two main categories of personnel. Former aviation cadets, eliminated for flying or physical deficiency, had first priority in assignment to OCS, provided they were recommended for officer training by their commandants. Warrant officers and enlisted men made up the second group. The qualifications for their selection established in February 1942 included age limits of 18 to 36 years, American citizenship, demonstrated capacity for leadership, physical condition as required for commissioned officers of the Army of the United States, a score of 110 or higher on the Army general classification test, and "such education or practical experience as will reasonably insure ... satisfactory completion of the course of instruction." These requirements remained in effect without important modification until after V-E Day. In June 1945 steps were taken toward restricting selection of candidates to individuals who waived discharge privileges under the current demobilization program.

The number of men eligible for OCS was greatly in excess of the quotas. Judicious selection of the applicants, a task assigned to local officer candidate examining boards, was both important and difficult. The criteria which guided the selection process of these boards varied to a considerable extent, and the laxness of some boards was criticized from the beginning. On the other hand, qualified men were often denied the opportunity to receive officer training because of the disposition at some posts and stations to discourage applications by those who were serving usefully in assigned enlisted duties. Higher authority

was aware of this practice and repeatedly cautioned against such discrimination as contrary to the best interests of the service.

Twelve weeks was the standard length of the OCS course until June 1943, at which time it was extended to sixteen weeks. The academic curriculum until January 1943 was uniform for all candidates and was presented under five headings: administration, mess, supply, transportation, and miscellaneous. In January, the curriculum was divided into two phases. During the first eight weeks students were instructed in the general duties of the junior officer; for the rest of the training period candidates were assigned to one of the following specialized programs: adjutant and personnel, supply, mess, intelligence, guard company, and training. Graduates could not always be assigned according to their OCS classification, but specialization gave more point to the curriculum than it previously had. This system continued without major alteration until October 1944, when the greatly reduced size of entering classes made specialization impracticable. Most of the instruction was conducted in classrooms, but near the end of the course the students took part in a ten-day bivouac, called field service, in which they simulated the defense of an airfield.

In the specialized phase of the program the emphasis fell sufficiently on practical questions to command the student's attention, but the earlier part of the program suffered from many faults. It was over-loaded, with never less than twenty-five separate subjects required of all students. The whole was poorly integrated and, in the effort to be detailed in coverage, was nevertheless superficial. The majority of the instructors, many of whom were recent OCS graduates, had no teaching experience and frequently did not conceal distaste for their assignments. In many cases the teacher did little more than review with the class the contents of mimeographed subject outlines issued to the students. To pass the courses, it was necessary only to memorize the outlines and cram for the tests. Some efforts were made to remedy the situation by more careful selection of instructors and by improvement of course outlines and teaching aids. Early in 1943, in keeping with a directive requiring "practical" instruction throughout the Technical Training Command, lectures were ordered abolished, but this move merely turned a bad situation into a chaotic one, and the directive was subsequently modified. The principal purpose of the academic program as given seems to have been to keep the candidate under a pressure designed to test his ability to comply with a variety of exacting requirements.

The dominant role in OCS was played by the Department of Military Training. Its director, who also served as commanding officer of the Corps of Air Corps Officer Candidates, was assisted by a staff of supervisory officers assigned to wings, groups, and squadrons of trainees. These tactical officers, and especially those assigned at the squadron level, worked closely with the officer candidates from the time of their arrival until graduation, giving their particular attention to the supervision of military drill and inspections. For the purposes of rapid indoctrination in the military way of life, the "class system" had been borrowed

from West Point. Student officers were chosen from the upper class, and the whole body of upperclassmen was charged to keep new students under pressure and to see that they rigidly observed prescribed rules of behavior. The methods employed were time-honored and familiar to most Americans through Hollywood versions of West Point life: the enforced recitation of regulations, posture "bracing," and other modified forms of hazing, which officially was banned. However well suited to the development of a professional soldier this system might be, it was abused in OCS and was at best of debatable utility for the training of a citizen soldier.

Enforcement of regulations was carried out primarily through a demerit system. Candidates were "gigged" for individual deficiencies, and demerits were assessed by the squadron commander according to a more or less standard scale. Accumulation of more than the maximum number of demerits allowable for a single week resulted in punishment "tours" (i.e., walking post) during week-end pass time. Deficiencies of this kind were sharply distinguished from breaches of the honor code. Candidates accused of cheating on examinations or of other violations of the military code of honor were judged by a student honor council. Individuals found guilty, after final review by the school commandant, were eliminated, reduced in grade, and reported to AAF Headquarters. A negligible proportion of officer candidates was eliminated for breaches of the honor code, but there were other failures. The percentage of eliminees and resignations, however, was never so high as the rumored 10 per cent or above. The actual figure was usually well below 5 per cent. The school was sharply criticized, especially in 1942, for not culling a larger number of those unfit for commissions.

Graduates of OCS provided the bulk of ground administrative officers required by the AAF, but it was also necessary to commission many thousands of men directly from civilian life. These individuals were predominantly men with business, teaching, or specialized experience; nearly all of them were from thirty to forty-five years old. The majority of these newly commissioned officers were assigned at once to particular jobs and given military indoctrination through local training programs. A substantial number, however, were assigned to a central officers' training school (OTS), established at Miami Beach soon after the activation of OCS. In June 1942, the two institutions were consolidated administratively although the programs remained separate. OTS students engaged their own accommodations at beach hotels which had reached informal agreements with AAF officials; food was perhaps the most difficult problem since the Army did not initially provide messing facilities. Not until near the close of the program was a satisfactory solution provided through establishment of a general mess. The last OTS class was graduated at Miami Beach in June 1943; training of officers commissioned directly from civilian life was thereafter decentralized to the commands and stations. By then more than 13,000 students had completed the program at OTS.

The curriculum was similar to that for officer candidates during the same period, but it was only half as long. The course, uniform for all officer trainees, included academic, military, and physical training. The chief contrast with candidate training lay in the fact that there was no class system, and outside of scheduled hours the officer students were free from squadron discipline. Physical exercise was less rigorous and was adjusted to fit the needs of the various age groups. While officer candidates were driven to stretch the limits of their physical endurance, the older officer students were cautioned against overexertion. Very few individuals were eliminated from OTS; in such cases they were reported to AAF Headquarters for ultimate disposition.

**From The Army Air Forces in World War II - Men and Planes
Chapter 20 (Other Training Programs Page 680-684)**

***United States Army Air Forces
U.S. Army Air Forces Statistical School (Harvard University)***

Statistical control training was authorized early in World War II by Assistant Secretary of War for Air Robert A. Lovett, in consultation with General H.H. Arnold, Commanding General of the Army Air Forces. Charles B. Thornton was Chief of Statistical Control. Harvard Business School Dean Donald K. David set up the Army Air Forces Statistical School at HBS in May 1942 for specially selected officer candidates, who studied at HBS after completing eight weeks of general administrative training at Officers' Candidate School in Miami Beach, Florida.

The original course of five weeks was extended to eight weeks in 1943. The purpose of the statistical training was to prepare statistical officers to gather information about personnel, aircraft, and equipment and to present facts and analyze them in ways that would suggest improvements for future missions and other operations. Instruction was provided primarily by members of the HBS faculty after indoctrination at Army Air Forces installations. The program came to be regarded as a good general training in administration in addition to being a grounding in statistical methods. The case method was employed for the teaching of reporting and analytical techniques, and field exercises were included in the curriculum. The course of study was developed in cooperation with the Statistical Control Division, Office of Management Control, Army Air Forces. Graduates of the program were assigned to all levels of command in the AAF.

The AAFSS operated for over two years, ceasing operations in October 1945. It produced 2,400 graduates, organized into groups, or "courses." There were forty "courses." The school's first civilian director was Edmund P. Learned, who was succeeded by Dan T. Smith. The AAF officer in charge of the school was Lt. Col. John Heflin. The model of statistical control taught at the AAFSS at HBS was adopted after the war by numerous companies, including Ford Motors.