

**OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL
CAMP COLUMBIA,
WACOL, BRISBANE, QLD
SWPA DURING WW2**

The Officers Candidate School was located at Camp Columbia at Wacol in Brisbane, Queensland from 1942-1945.

At the time of Pearl Harbor Edmund J. Ryan was with the 36th Engineer Regiment (Combat). A month later he went on Atlantic Fleet Amphibious ops. off the Virginia coast with the 1st Infantry Division. A month, to the day later, the French ship "Normandie" caught fire as it was being converted to a troop ship and sank in New York harbor. In March '42 he was assigned to the faculty of the Army Engineer School OCS at Fort Belvoir, VA. When petrol rationing was started in July, Edmund requested foreign duty. Two other officers, Edmund J. Ryan and three sergeants were assigned to become the Engineer Section of an Officer Candidate School to be activated in Australia. They left New Zealand on 26 November 1942 after dropping the Yale University 39th General Hospital unit, including 45 Doctors and 139 Registered Nurses, at Wesley School near Auckland.

Their chartered Dutch Ship "Tjisadane" with Chinese and Javanese crew arrived in Brisbane on 1 December 1942. With the rest of the OCS Staff and Faculty they went directly to Aussie-built hutments at Camp Columbia at Wacol, a half mile across the railroad tracks from 6th Army Headquarters. With the arrival of Enlisted Candidates from New Guinea they moved into tents there. After a prescribed course of three months, most of them qualified to be commissioned as 2nd Lieutenants.

After a year at Wacol with the 3rd Training Company, Edmund J. Ryan put in a request for duty with troops. After a timber survey and assembling the parts of a British Pickles saw mill at Finchhaven, NG After 6 weeks at Victoria Park, he joined the 91st Engineer Regt. at Port Moresby, later moving to Biak, NEI (now Indonesia). Edmund spent 38 months in the SWPA.

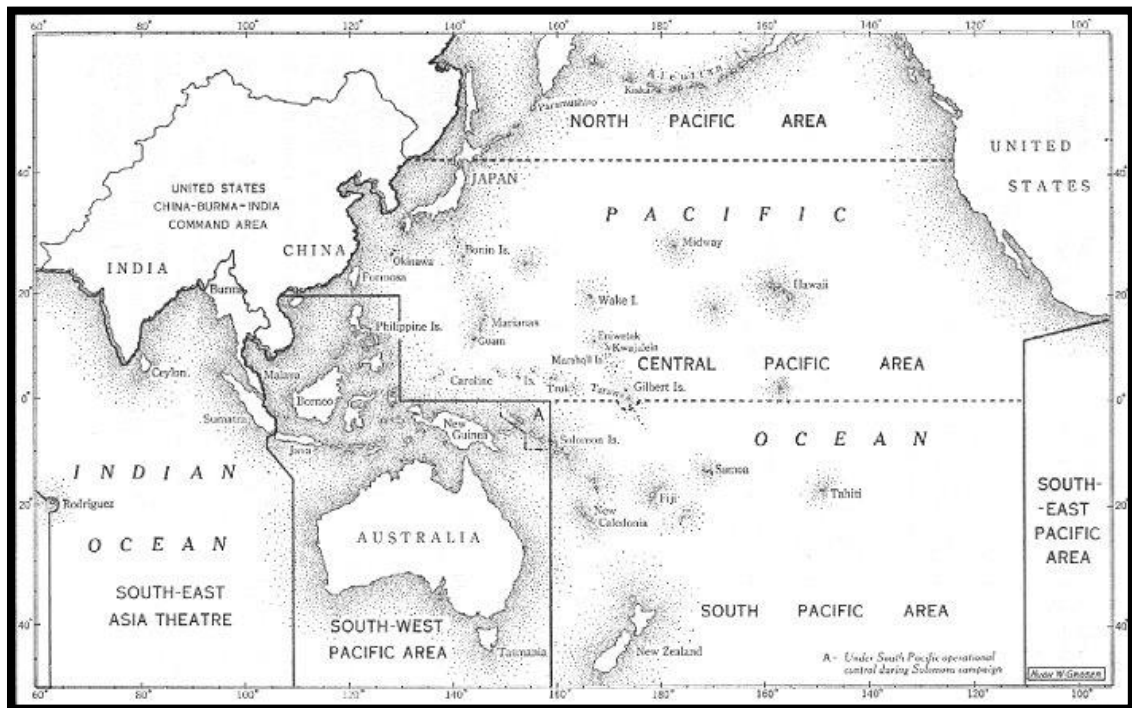
On 1 February 2003 Edmund J. Ryan told me that they were literally in an American enclave at Camp Columbia. He said:

"We had a quite busy schedule at OCS there, relieved by dates with American nurses of the 28th Surgical Unit located in a large house on stilts near 6th Army Headquarters and Saturday night dances at Lennon Hotel in Brisbane with music by the 32nd Division Band. Other remembrances were of the thousands of mosquitoes in my little wall tent. We had to sleep in mosquito bars. We did have hot water in outdoor showers."

From: <https://www.ozatwar.com/usarmy/ocs.htm>

**OFFICER
CANDIDATE SCHOOL
HEADQUARTERS
OCTOBER 1943**

Commandant: Col. Haney, H.	Reproduction Plant: Capt. Pash, L.D.	AGD Section: Chief Instructor: Major Press, J.E.
Executive Officer: Col. Dewey, F.O.	Post Exchange: Lt. Hulbert, H.B.	GAC Section:
Director of Training: Col. Privett, G.P.	Mess Officer: Lt. Devane, W.H.	Chief Instructor: Major Michael, D.T.
Assistant Director of Training: Lt. Col. Dunn, T.N.	Officer's Club Message Center Guard House Stables	CE Section: Chief Instructor: Major Griggs, E.L., Jr.
Operations Officer: Major Wise, G.E.	Headquarters Det.: Capt. Poole, M.L.	CWS Section: Chief Instructor: Lt. Col. Andes, J.O.
Adjutant: Lt. Swise, R.E.	Det. Orderly Room: Lt. Cross, M.A.	FA Section: Chief Instructor: Major Johnson, F.W.
Sgt. Major	First Training Bn.: Lt. Col. Krayenbuml, C., C.O.	Inf. Section: Chief Instructor: Major Dyson, J.L.
Personnel Officer: Lt. Gausman, C.W. W/O Barouch, H.W.	First Training Co.: Capt. Blackman, R.C., C.O.	MCA Section: Chief Instructor: Col. France, G.D.
Supply Officer: Capt. Davis, T.L.	Second Training Co.: Major Bristol, M.C.C., C.O.	Ord. Section: Chief Instructor: Major Amrine, H.T.
MCA Supply: Col. France, G.D.	Third Training Co.: Capt. Ryan, E.J.	Q.M. Section: Chief Instructor: Lt. Col. Russell, H.E.
Ordnance Officer: Capt. Flornoy, E.	Fourth Training Co.: Capt. Froeber, R.J.	Signal Section: Chief Instructor: Major Sawyer, C.H.
Range Officer: Capt. Fuller, J.S.	Fifth Training Co.: Major Taylor, J.F.	TC Section: Chief Instructor: Lt. Col. Smeltzer, T.R.
Motor Pool: Lt. Clarke, C.R.	OCS BRANCH INSTRUCTORS:	
Dispensary No. 1: Lt. Col. Fineberg, M. Capt. Thacker, W.A.	ACA Section: Chief Instructor: Major Budinger, W.F.	
Dispensary No. 2: Capt. Graul, E.G.		



Capt. E. H. Lowe, the first Black graduate from the OCS in the SWPA, pins insignia on 2nd Lt. James B. Morris, Des Moines, Iowa at OCS graduation exercise held at Camp Columbia, Brisbane, on 29 Jun 1943. Signal Corps Photo: GHQ SWPA SC 43 7037 (T/4 Harold Hoffman)



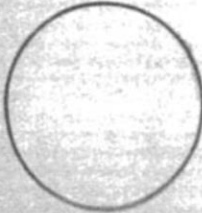
The First Training Company of the Officer Candidate School at Camp Columbia. This class graduated in September 1944. Joe H. Johnston is marked in the photo.



S/Sgt. Joe H. Johnston had been in New Britain before he was sent to Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Camp Columbia. Because of a delay in transportation, he was too late for his original intended class and he was temporarily attached to Headquarters Company. Compared to a fox hole in New Britain, Camp Columbia was a near paradise for S/Sgt. Joe H. Johnston. After he graduated from OCS Joe Johnston was assigned to the 43rd Infantry Division at Aitape in New Guinea in preparation for the invasion of the Philippines.

Print the complete address in plain block letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No. _____



ICENSOR'S STAMP

To

Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Johnston
Cardiff,
Harford County,
Maryland

From

33577020

S/Sgt. J. H. Johnston
Headquarters Detachment
Officer Candidate School
APO 920 (Sender's address)
Care of the Postmaster
San Francisco, California

March 19th, 1944

(Date)

Somewhere in Australia

Dear Mother and Dad,

Now that I'm situated you can expect to hear from me more often. This is Sunday and there is no one here in the office so I have been doing a lot of letter writing. I owe letters to so many people. I guess that I'll just have to wait and put a "Thank You" notice in the paper when I get home. The Slateville Social Club sent me a card and handkerchief for Christmas. If you see any of them please thank them and tell them that I shall write to them soon. I guess that my mail gets pretty popular sometimes. Rev. Jones mails you my letter to him. Helen reads all my letters to Kay and when I write to Phyllis and Myra Jones they call Kay up and read the letter over the phone. There are thousands of things that I could write about if I only could. I can't mention things that I have seen because that would give away the place and I can't mention any places so that is the way that it goes.

I hear all of these fellows growling about his place all of the time. I get so darned mad at them. They ought to be up in those islands. Of course this isn't home or the U. S. but it is pretty darn good especially during war time and it is 100% better than we had it in Iceland. We have a pretty good Canteen where we can get ice cream and cokes most of the time and anything that we need otherwise, we have showers with hot water, tents with board floors in them, a radio, a day room with lots of books and magazines, ping pong tables, volley ball courts, horse shoes, and can go to town every night if we want to. Just listen to what we had for dinner today (Sunday): steak, brown gravy, mashed potatoes, string beans, sliced tomatoes, ice cream with chocolate sauce, lemonade, apples and bananas and bread and butter. I saw very little bread in the islands and no fresh butter. I don't know how anyone would expect more than that. Of course it isn't home cooking or home conditions but great guns there is a war going on and we are supposed to be in it.

I have been feeling a lot better and in a couple of weeks I should be my old self. I have started to gain again. That is so discouraging to me. Every thing that I eat turns right to fat. I have tried to cut down on my eating. I cut out breakfast and I have started to work out on the obstacle course. When I get heavy all my clothes have to be changed and that is a heck of a job.

This has been a beautiful day but now it is raining. It rains a lot here. This is summer for Australia. When you are sweltering in the heat we will be having our winter. They tell me that there is never any snow here but that it gets pretty cold at nights. This is supposed to be a semi-tropical country. Did you have a garden this year? Do you still have strawberries? I should love to have some. They do have a lot of fruit over here and do I enjoy it, especially the big white grapes.

I hope that you will send me some more pictures from time to time. I haven't stopped looking at the ones that you sent. I wish that one of the three kids in their aprons had turned out clearer. I'm hoping that I shall be in the Christmas pictures next year. It is almost too much to hope for but maybe this war will be over by then.

Lots of love,

V - MAIL

Joe Jr.

Letter home from Joe H. Johnson March 19, 1944

The Officer Candidate School at Camp Columbia had its own medical
Dispensaries as follows in October 1943:

Dispensary No. 1:

Lt. Col. Fineberg, M.

Capt. Thacker, W.A.

Dispensary No. 2:

Capt. Graul, E.G.

In May 1944 and February 1945, it is shown as follows:

Dispensary:

Major Graul, E.G. (Surgeon)

Capt. Thacker, W.A. (Dental Officer)

Lt. Goldberg, P. (Ass't. Surgeon)



Medical Staff at the Officer Candidate School taken between Feb 43 and Jan 44

135 To Graduate Before Officers' School Opens

By William F. Boni

[Associated Press Correspondent]

Somewhere in Australia, Dec. 5 (Delayed)—The first officer candidate school for United States troops in Australia is not scheduled to open until January 1. Yet on the day of the official opening, the school will be graduating its first class of 135 newly commissioned second lieutenants.

If this seems paradoxical, blame it on a combination of circumstances.

Early in November, four officers flew here from the United States to map out plans for the OCS, urgently needed to meet the American forces' demands for officer replacements. They were Col. Harold Haney, former executive officer of the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, and chosen as commandant of the Australia school; Col. Frank O. Dewey, a cavalryman, his executive officer; Col. George P.

Privett, Field Artillery, assistant director of the school, and Lieut. George A. Tapper, from Fort Benning.

Suggests Six-Week Course

Since the OCS comes under the supervision of the army's Services of Supply, one of their first conferences was with Brig. Gen. Richard J. Marshall, SOS commander in the Southwest Pacific. The general's reaction was unexpected, to say the least.

He said he had one hundred and thirty-five men, all SOS specialists, who were about to be commissioned without special officer training. Why didn't Colonel Haney and his three-man staff take them off his hands and give them a six-week course in general army orientation?

Continued on next page

(Please go to next page for the rest of article)

"That was on November 10," says Colonel Dewey, "and five days later we started the school. We really started from scratch. We had nothing. We had to borrow cooks from one outfit to prepare the food for the men, a mess hall from another to feed them in, officers from wherever we could get them to serve as instructors.

Eight Hours Of Instruction

"But," and he looks pretty pleased, "we've been giving those men eight hours of instruction a day, and they've had to study hard at night to keep up with their work."

For the balance of this month, things should be a bit easier. The full teaching and administrative staff—officers and enlisted men—now has arrived from the United States.

Heads Of Units

The school's eight departments will be headed up as follows:

INFANTRY—Lieut. Col. Ernest E. Barlow, a regular officer whose wife lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.

FIELD ARTILLERY—Lieut. Col. Thomas W. Dunn, Fort Worth, Texas.

QUARTERMASTER—Lieut. Col. George M. Grimes, from the Quartermaster School at Fort Lee, Va.

CHEMICAL WARFARE—Lieut. Col. James O. Andes, in civilian life an associate professor of plant pathology at the University of Tennessee.

ENGINEERS—Major Ernest L. Griggs, Waynesboro, Va.

COAST ARTILLERY—Major Donald T. Michael, Cincinnati.

ORDNANCE—Capt. Harold T. Amrine, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

SIGNAL CORPS—Capt. Floyd W. Dickerson, from Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.