History of the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps
by Richard Van Ness Ginn, COL (Ret.)

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Medical Administration Corps OCS

Substitution yielded expanded opportunity for MAC officers to serve in a diversity of duties that exceeded those of World War I. They served as hospital administrators, statisticians, physical training directors, medical equipment maintenance officers, historians, morale officers, litter officers, training officers, and public relations officers, to name a few. Improvement in position opportunity was accompanied by improvement in promotion opportunity in 1942, when the War Department, acting upon a Wadhams Committee recommendation, provided for advancement of MAC officers beyond the grade of captain. In previous years young officer candidates had accurately sized up the situation: "If we go into the infantry we can wear four stars, but if we go into the Medical Administrative Corps, we wear two bars. That is as high as we can get." But now there was opportunity for promotion to any rank, including the potential for general officer.

Officer Candidate Schools

Substitution was initially constrained by the limited availability of Medical Administrative Corps replacements, and some shortages persisted. The department was compelled to rapidly expand the MAC to meet the demand, so it established an MAC officer candidate school (OCS) in July 1941 at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, that a War Department inspector later called the best OCS in the Army. Increasing use of MAC officers and the activation of new medical units produced a demand that outstripped Carlisle's capacity. Consequently, in May 1942 the department opened a second OCS at Camp Barkeley, a post located eleven miles southwest of Abilene, Texas. Between them, Carlisle and Barkeley commissioned 17,094 officers in the third largest of the eighteen Army OCS programs. Another 200 were commissioned through special OCS programs in England, New Caledonia, Hawaii, and Australia-the last near Brisbane, which, its director lamented, was "on the deserted side as far as the Yanks go."

Throughout the war the vicissitudes of class sizes and the closing and reopening of the schools were creatures of imperfect projections of MAC requirements. That imprecision arose from changes in force requirements as well as in policy. Rapidly expanding opportunities for MAC officers produced burgeoning OCS classes by the fall of 1942. However, projected requirements had overstated the positions actually available, and the department began placing graduates into replacement pools pending reassignment.

As a result of the changing requirements, Carlisle suspended operations at the end of February 1943 and reopened in May 1944. Barkeley had no classes in February, March, and April 1944. In July 1943 the Army predicted a surplus of over twenty eight hundred Medical Administrative Corps officers by the end of the year, and nearly fifteen hundred officers were in replacement pools that fall. At that point the Army decided to replace the second physician in maneuver battalions-the assistant battalion surgeon-with an MAC officer. In addition, increasing casualty loads created staffing problems at the stateside hospitals. Those changes created a resurgence of demand, which

required the schools to resume full operation until the United States accepted the surrender of Japan.

Carlisle and Barkeley shared a common curriculum divided into six basic subjects: tactics, administration, logistics, training, sanitation, and chemical warfare. Tactics consisted of map reading, Army and Medical Department organization, military operations, employment of medical units, and a field training exercise. Administration included general and company-level administration and military law. Logistics embraced vehicle maintenance, troop movements, and logistics in the field. The training portion prepared candidates to be instructors and, in addition, encompassed drill and ceremonies, first aid, and inspections. Sanitation included preventive medicine and field sanitation. Chemical warfare classes trained candidates for duties as medical unit gas officers.

Lessons learned in the war influenced curriculum changes. For example, the department's medical logistics problems caused modification of the supply portions, and reports of deficiencies in land navigation led to increased emphasis on map reading. Academic progress was measured with tests and quizzes. A passing grade of 75 was required in all subjects, and failure in two or more subjects required review of the candidate by a board of officers.

The candidates' day began at 0545 with first call and ended at 1700 with retreat, followed by two hours of supervised study from 1800-2000. Classes were scheduled based on eight fifty-minute periods with ten-minute breaks. Classroom instruction was interspersed with outdoor problems and demonstrations, drill, and road marches. Physical activity included daily calisthenics, obstacle courses, and interplatoon sports. Free time for social activities normally occurred on Saturday afternoon.

Basic prerequisites for MAC OCS were the same as for any Army OCS. Applicants were required to have scores greater than 100 on the Army General Classification Test and a minimum of three months' enlisted service, although that could be waived for education, experience, or prior service. In any case, the applicant was required to have completed basic training. The background of Peter A. Luppen, a member of the second class, was typical of the early candidates. As a soldier in the 7th Division, Luppen had learned "how to wash a horse's rear end, front end and underneath" before he went to OCS.

Each Army branch identified additional prerequisites it desired, and MAC OCS applicants were also expected to meet at least one of the following additional requirements: (a.) successful completion of one year of college; (b.) practical experience in management, for example as head of a business department, an athletic coach, or a noncommissioned officer; (c.) one year of experience in a business specialty, for example as an accountant, records supervisor, or sales manager; or, (d.) practical experience in hospital management, medical records management, medical supply, mess management in large institutions,or pharmacy.

The Carlisle and Barkeley schools graduated 17,094 of 24,929 candidates for an overall pass rate of 68.6 percent. Carlisle's pass rate of 79 percent was significantly better than Barkeley's 65.3 percent. In fact, of seventeen Barkeley classes from January 1943 through June 1944, thirteen had more candidates failing than passing, and the "unlucky" Class Number 13 had only a 43.5 percent pass rate. Barkeley set up a special four-week Command School in 1943 in an attempt to salvage some of the candidates who appeared promising. Selected candidates were withdrawn from the regular OCS course in groups of eight to nine students to undergo extensive training in drill and

command, calisthenics, public speaking, and practice teaching. Sixty-seven of the eighty-four candidates placed in this program successfully completed OCS.

The Barkeley attrition rate became so high that the Army Service Forces headquarters asked for an explanation. The school faulted poor selection methods, which sent students to OCS who had no chance of success, had inadequate prior military training, and were held to the exacting standards of their platoon leaders. The poor living conditions at Barkeley added to the rigors of the training environment. Some students decided it was all a mistake and took advantage of the privilege of voluntary withdrawals.

The surgeon general's director of training saw it differently and argued that the difference in attrition between the two schools was due to a difference in philosophy. The idea at Carlisle was "to help as many through as possible," but at Barkeley the approach was to "see how many candidates can be kept from becoming officers." OCS candidates witnessed many of their classmates fail. One who watched was Joseph P. Peters, later a nationally prominent health care administration consultant. Peter's barracks was half empty by the time he graduated from Barkeley.

Most candidates who failed did so for leadership deficiencies. Peters said that most of those who washed out at Barkeley lacked "command presence." Candidates had to learn to bark out orders, and a good set of lungs helped.43 Carlisle counted 311 of the 441 failures in its first thirteen classes as leadership deficiencies. Barkeley had 5,348 failures in its first thirty one classes. Of those, 2,942 were voluntary resignations, an option not available at Carlisle. The next highest category encompassed the 1,149 candidates dropped for leadership deficiencies, followed by 614 separated for academic problems. College graduates had the lowest attrition rates.

An Officer Candidate Preparatory School was established at Barkeley in April 1942 to help reduce the failure rate. The four week course was designed by 1st Lt. Edward Marks, MAC, assisted by 1st Lt. Robert L. Parker, MAC, and Marks served as its first commandant. It had a cadre of five MAC officers and six enlisted personnel, and classes ranged from 150 to 400 students. Similar schools were established at all medical replacement training centers. Not surprisingly, OCS candidates who had completed that course did better than those who had not.

Carlisle Barracks

The Medical Field Service School at Carlisle Barracks expanded its staff of 108 by another 40 officers, 87 enlisted personnel, and 4 civilian typists to operate the OCS. The instructors were mainly Medical Corps officers at first, but that changed as instructors and key staff officers were replaced with OCS graduates. Capt. Louis F. Williams, MAC, was the school secretary for the first class, and four other MAC officers were on the staff. Students were organized into a battalion, and platoon leaders and assistant platoon leaders also served as instructors. The commandant of the Medical Field Service School acted as the OCS commandant, with day-to-day operations vested in the assistant commandant (Chart 3). The Carlisle OCS was able to take advantage of the established facilities at Carlisle Barracks, and its candidates enjoyed better billets, classrooms, and recreation facilities than their peers in the more Spartan surroundings at Barkeley. The OCS used thirty-one buildings, a number that included seventeen barracks, three 300-seat auditoriums, and five 250-seat classrooms.

The inaugural class of 100 officer candidates began on 1 July 1941, and enrollment increased to 250 students by the third class. With the fourth class the school shifted to staggered rather than

consecutive scheduling and began enrolling a new class of 250 candidates every thirty days for a capacity of 750 candidates at any given time. The course initially totaled 561 hours of instruction conducted over twelve weeks. It increased to 576 hours by 1942, and by July 1943 was a seventeen-week program of 808 hours.

Carlisle operated without interruption until 27 February 1943, when declining requirements for MAC officers caused its suspension. It reopened on 25 May 1944 and enrolled a class of 250 students in each of the ensuing twelve months. The thirteenth class, of only thirty-four candidates, continued after the war had ended, and when that class graduated on 17 October 1945, Carlisle OCS ceased operation permanently. It had commissioned 4,688 officers during its existence, and its graduates played important roles in the Army and in the Medical Department. One, John E. Haggerty, was promoted to brigadier general and appointed chief of the Medical Service Corps in 1973. Another, Leo Benade, later transferred to the Adjutant General's Corps and retired as a lieutenant general.

There was also some opportunity for black Americans. Army OCS in World War II was integrated, and the Medical Administrative Corps OCS graduated 387 black officers. By September 1945 there were 213 black MAC officers as well as 8 black Sanitary Corps officers serving in a variety of staff and command positions in black field medical units and fixed facilities stateside and overseas. One was the 93d Infantry Division at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Others were the 268th, 335th, and 383d Station Hospitals in Burma and the Philippines. Stateside assignments included the hospitals at Tuskegee, Alabama, and Fort Huachuca, Arizona, but black officers had difficulty finding suitable housing and they were not assigned unless segregated quarters were available. The limited opportunities in the Medical Department resulted in a few officers' being sent for training at the Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia. Sixteen black MAC officers were detailed to the infantry by mid-1945.

The Army formed sanitary companies specifically for staffing by black soldiers and officers. The companies initially had a nonspecific mission and were assigned to hospitals when requested by hospital commanders; the first two were established at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and at Camp Livingston, Louisiana, where the hospitals had all-black wards. Col. William A. Hardenbergh, SnC, chief of the Surgeon General's Sanitary Engineering Division, recommended the company's use in insect and mosquito control, and the Army formed 87 medical sanitary companies of 3 officers and 112 enlisted soldiers. The company was organized in two platoons to drain swampy land or lowlands, perform sanitary surveys, and provide insect and rodent control.

The presence of black candidates in the first classes was a milestone. When Col. Elliotte J. Williams, MSC, entered Carlisle in March 1942, he was 1 of only 6 black candidates in a class of 300; the class just before his had only 1 black candidate. Four of his black classmates were eliminated by the end of the first month, and he began to suspect that discrimination was at work because two of the four were college graduates and the other two had more enlisted experience than he did. However, Williams and his remaining black classmate were assured that race was not a factor in the fate of the others. They had simply been unable to meet the standards expected of an Army officer. "Thus advised, we relaxed, worked together on our study assignments, and enjoyed the meager spare time that was available."

Williams described the program that provided so many with the gold bars of a second lieutenant:

We made friends of fellow candidates and attacked with new vigor our program in military sanitation, field medicine and surgery, administration, training management, logistics, and military art. We learned how to build and maintain a compost heap for the cavalry, the principles of battlefield triage of the wounded, execution of motor marches, and the development and conduct of training programs. We learned how to conduct a sanitary inspection, manage a mess hall or motor pool, the principles of medical supply, and personnel administration. We were to be the generalists in medical administration, prepared to assume any medical administrative duty in a hospital or field unit.

Williams and his friend graduated in May 1942 and were posted to the 93d Infantry Division, where Williams was assigned as executive officer for the division surgeon. There he found the post facilities were completely segregated, including the tables in the officers' mess. Later he requested transfer to the Army hospital at Tuskegee, Alabama, where he served as the enlisted detachment commander. Lieutenant Williams and his wife and baby daughter encountered the humiliations that awaited a black family traveling in the South when they moved to their new assignment. They negotiated restroom privileges at service stations and prayed that their car would not break down on the road.

Camp Barkeley

The first Camp Barkeley OCS class of 253 candidates began on 11 May 1942. The cadre consisted of twelve MAC officers transferred from the Carlisle staff who arrived in Texas just four days ahead of the students. Another fourteen officers arrived from Carlisle two weeks after the school opened, and later additions to the cadre came from Barkeley graduating classes. Initially department heads trained new instructors. Later, the school established a fourteen-hour faculty development course that included graded practice presentations. Barkeley adopted the staggered scheduling used by Carlisle and enrolled an additional class of 250 students each month until a capacity of 750 candidates at one time was reached. The capacity increased in June 1942 to 1,000 students, and by the end of September 1942 Barkeley was enrolling a new class of 500 students every two weeks.

In July 1943, as the student census reached 2,969, the school had a staff of 564, with 173 officers, 376 enlisted, and 15 civilians. Barkeley reached its peak of 3,011 candidates in attendance in July 1943. Class size then dropped monthly until January 1944 when the class numbered 106 candidates, the smallest. Barkeley enrolled no more classes after that until May 1944 when it again enrolled 250 students. In June 1944, as Carlisle reopened, Barkeley expanded to classes of 500 students. Barkeley graduated its fortieth and final class on 15 March 1945, having commissioned 12,406 officers since May 1942. The highest course average in the school's history, 90.22, was posted by 2d Lt. Thomas P. Glassmayer, MAC, Class 40.

The OCS occupied stark, treeless terrain in an area formerly belonging to the 120th Medical Regiment of the 45th Division. It used ninety-three buildings, temporary structures of the wood construction typical of Army camps. Those included 58 fifteen- man "hutments," 12 five-man hutments, and 9 mess halls in areas nicknamed Kings Row, the Black Outs, and Tortilla Flats (also called Pneumonia Flats). Hutments were tarpaper-covered wood-frame structures with no amenities and "were cold as tombs" in winter.

Training followed the typical OCS regimen of copious harassment, drill, and ceremonies. Sometimes the ceremonies went poorly; when a British Royal Army Medical Corps colonel visited

in July 1942, a canopy erected to shield the colonel from the Texas sun fell down, nearly smothering him.

Morale was reported as exceptionally high. Entertainment included facilities for all seasonal sports, and dances were held with the cooperation of the YMCA, the USO, and nearby colleges. The highlight was a class graduation dance held in the school's gymnasium the night before graduation. However, high attrition rates colored some candidates' perceptions. There were rumors of a snitch in the barracks and a belief that "the walls had ears." While there is no evidence that a system of informers existed, the suspicion that it did reflected the stressful environment. A peer review system that required each candidate to rate fellow candidates on personal characteristics added to the pressure.

By April 1945, 158 black candidates had completed Barkeley OCS, with a completion success rate the same as white candidates. Life was not easy for those pioneering officers. Abilene, Texas, was rigidly segregated, and most recreational facilities were denied to blacks. The effect upon their morale was such that the surgeon general requested special authority to transfer black candidates to Carlisle. That did not occur, however, because the Carlisle facilities were overcrowded.

Training exhibits at Barkeley included two elaborate outdoor displays. One was a sanitation exhibit with sections demonstrating disposal of human, kitchen, and animal wastes; sanitation of field messes; delousing; and mosquito control. The other was a miniature battlefield measuring 60 by 349 feet that illustrated the three zones of medical support, with models of the medical installations in each zone. The portion for the communications zone and the zone of the interior was 212 feet long and incorporated an artificial pond, representing the oceans that separated them.

One of the field exercises was a four-hour class on evacuation techniques in which candidates alternated duties as collecting company commander, clearing company commander, litter bearer platoon leader, and ambulance platoon leader. Candidates were graded on their knowledge of emergency medical treatment and their ability to evacuate simulated casualties. A six-day bivouac included a series of training exercises in a field setting.

Elliot Richardson completed the Barkeley OCS in 1943. He later held some of the highest positions in the United States government, including secretary of defense. Richardson began his military career after surmounting several difficulties. His repeated efforts to volunteer had been defeated by poor eyesight; he was drafted in December 1942, and although he had memorized the eye chart, his glasses gave him away. He was classified as a noncombatant and ordered to enlisted medical training at Camp Pickett, Virginia. There he completed OCS prep school, then went to Barkeley. "I've been a candidate for elective office," he later recalled, "and I've been elected to various things, but I think my proudest moment in any election was being elected platoon leader of my OCS platoon." He thought Barkeley was "a very tough school."

Another distinguished alumnus was Col. Vernon McKenzie, MSC, who retired in 1984 as the principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, a position he held with some intermissions for nearly ten years during the period following his retirement from the Army in 1967. McKenzie was drafted in 1941 and after basic training was stationed in Brisbane, Australia. There he applied for OCS. "I went to a miserable place called Camp Barkeley, Texas, and decided shortly thereafter that I could withstand any form of psychological warfare that the Army could wish to apply to me for three months." His company commander was Capt. John Haggerty, MAC, later brigadier general and chief of the Medical Service Corps. Col. Knute Tofte-Nielsen, MSC,

had a different experience. Tofte-Nielsen came to Barkeley after service as an enlisted medic with the 76th Division at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. He found Barkeley "very pleasant, basically," an experience in which his enlisted background helped immeasurably.

OCS candidates stood regular inspections. During one, the inspecting officer asked a candidate to turn over his brass belt buckle. It turned out to be very dirty "That's brass, too, isn't it?" challenged the inspector. Without hesitation the candidate lifted one foot and pointed to the bottom of his shoe. "That's leather, too, but I don't polish it." The candidate was hauled before a cadre board, which decided he should be retained in the program. The Army needed an officer who could think on his feet.

Elliot Richardson, who had attended Barkeley, was commissioned as a second lieutenant, MAC, and served as a litter bearer platoon leader in the 4th Infantry Division from its D-day landing on Utah Beach through V-E Day. His platoon was part of a medical collecting company that supported the 12th Infantry Regiment, a unit authorized about three thousand soldiers that sustained nine thousand casualties in its eleven months of combat operations. The casualty rate translated into a 500 percent turnover of personnel in some rifle companies. Richardson quickly learned that there was no role for litter bearers to the rear of battalion aid stations because field ambulances handled evacuation from that level of the evacuation chain. Therefore, he employed his squads as relief teams for the litter bearers of the maneuver battalions. He used his jeep as a field ambulance, and his record was eighteen casualties carried in and upon the vehicle at one time. Richardson experienced the exhilaration of danger, but at the same time he learned the satisfaction of service for its own sake during experiences that remained vivid the rest of his life. Twice wounded and twice recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross, he was intensely proud of his contribution as a MAC officer. "I will never do anything that I feel better about," he told an interviewer.