

CHAPTER V -- AS THE TWIG IS BENT

"Al ain't sellin' excuses. Al's sellin' whiskey,"

Attributed to Frank Nitti,
Al Capone's Enforcer.

Hingeless furnace room doors, hanging ajar, creaked crazily in each errant breeze. Soot-stained ivory paint peeled in great strips from rickety frame buildings, pocked with broken windows and rusty, torn screens. A spattered sign, whose faded lettering faintly proclaimed "Courts and Boards," was half-hidden by waist-high weeds.

Inside, stairs sagged drunkenly, scarred and splintered by countless abrasive boots. Prehistoric plumbing clung precariously to reeking walls, adorned with high water marks from over-flowing commodes.

The aura of desolation was only heightened by pathetic patterns of whitewashed rocks and patches of pallid flowers.

This squalid scene wasn't Virginia City, Nevada after the Comstock Lode petered out.

It was the U.S. Army Training Center (USATC) at Fort Dix, New Jersey in the summer of 1956, serving recruits from the most populous region in these United States.

The dry rot was far more penetrating than superficial symptoms suggest.

Crackerjack officers and noncoms shunned the repetitious drudgery of basic training like a pestilence, and DA mirrored their view. Scarcely half a dozen Regular Army officers graced 2d Training Regiment rosters: one Colonel; one Light Colonel; a First Lieutenant; and a smattering of Second Johns.^{1*} Dix was the Kiss of Death.

The several battalion headquarters contained a quaint collection of aberrations. One rum-soaked recluse had the self-imposed mission of sowing shade trees with blocks of salt to reduce leaf-raking chores in the fall. His Exec never before had been exposed to an infantry organization, training or otherwise. A third gem, President of a Special Court, espoused the philosophy that delinquents from Hell's Kitchen were more to be pitied than censured, since they never had been Boy Scouts. Still another maladjusted mentor was on the road to suicide.

Down in the training companies, many of which were commanded by "senior" Second Lieutenants, comic opera aspects weren't quite so hilarious. More often, they made grown men cry.

Three or four frazzle-nerved "noncoms" commonly played shepherd to 200 recruits.^{**} In most units, at least one of these

* By contrast, nearly all 82d Airborne Division officers above the rank of Lieutenant were hard-charging Regulars at that time.²

** Apparently, this wasn't far from the norm. Across the Continent, at Fort Ord, California, two officers and three field cadremen -- a Field First and two platoon sergeants, ratio 66-to-1 -- was about par for basic training companies in the late 1950's and early 1960's. Some had fewer.³

sleep-walkers, who put in 15 to 20 hours a day, was a PFC chewing a teething ring, or a Private straight from AIT.*

Motivation was zero. Company NCO's got short shrift during formal training, which was conducted exclusively by Regimental Committees. Day after wearisome day, cadremen shook troops out of the sack in the darkness before First Call, marched 'em from barracks to field, stood idle for hours in chilling rain or broiling sun, then marched them home again. Only after Retreat, when committees scurried for hammock and hearth, did their thankless work begin. Teaching. Guiding. Counseling. Supervising.

"OK, men. Give me your undivided attention. This is how you --

Mop a floor.

Roll a pack.

Puncture blisters.

Burnish brass.

Spit shine shoes.

Make a bunk.

Air a mattress.

Fold drawers.

Roll socks.

Fire the furnace.

Blouse your trousers.

* Basic Combat Training (BCT) comprises the first eight-week stint in the Army. It is programmed back-to-back with a second eight devoted to Advanced Individual Training (AIT).

Clean a rifle.
Scrub webbing.
Stow belongings.
Foil thieves.
Stand inspection."

And so far, far on into the night. Time off was out of the question, except for short but sweet surcease between cycles.

In the "Old Army," most of this homely instruction was imparted by Corporal squad leaders, or their astute PFC assistants, who, between them, hand raised each recruit from a pup. The teacher-student ratio was something like 5-to-1 (Figure 2). At Dix, three men were sandbagged into doing it all.

To get "New Army" Trainees into the right uniform with the right equipment at the right time, Company Commanders screened the bare-bones records of incoming gooney birds to identify likely Acting NCO's. This was a hit-or-miss proposition, with no objective selection standards nor any systematic provision for channeling latent leadership once found.⁵ Harold Carter, the world's third-ranking heavyweight fistfighter in 1956, was a better than average platoon guide; he didn't have too many smarts, but no one ever stepped out of line. Even so, he and his Acting Jack cohorts were a poor substitute for mature, experienced hands.

Training cycles bore down heavily, monotonous as a metronome. After the first six or eight laps around the track, even the steadiest noncoms began to show strain. One indistinguishable day blended

blandly into the next, until the comatose cadre completely lost track of time. As tempers frayed, sharp-tongued Sergeants exhibited all the patience and understanding of a Ranger's karate chop, forgetting that the incessant stream of identical questions was fresh as an Alpine spring to each current crop of greenhorns.

Eventually, fine NCO's were broken on the wheel; others quit in place.

During this stultifying interlude, General Maxwell D. Taylor, then Army Chief of Staff, visited Fort Dix to determine USATC problems first-hand. At a convention of post, regimental and battalion officers, he asked piercing, forthright questions, but not a man had the guts to stand up and say, "This is the way it is." Instead, to bolster the mirage of affluence, red-helmeted noncoms were trucked from site-to-site as he inspected phases of training.

Paradoxically, pampered darlings of the RFA lived in the lap of luxury on the high rent side of the post.

Many of these 17 and 18-year-olds, in for a sheltered six months, found the Reserve Forces Act of 1955 a slick way to beat the Draft -- for, as DA cooed so coyly, they weren't even members of the active Army.⁶ Teenage patricians, living in brand-new, high-rise barracks, were diapered and breast-fed in special units under a full complement of hand-picked noncoms selected for "outstanding leadership and personality characteristics, demonstrated proficiency in assigned duties, physical, mental and moral qualities of a high order, and a well-groomed appearance."⁷

Laughingly, RFA cadres were "made available....from over-
strengths presently at training installations* and in Army areas."⁸

Blood was drawn from the stone.

Nothing was too good for active Army recruits -- and nothing was what they got.

* * * * *

This was an inexcusable mistake. Short-sheetin' ECT units is like withholding teachers from elementary schools.

Basic training is the formative period that molds the minds, muscles and impulses of tomorrow's NCO's. How well junior learns "right shoulder arms" during his first eight weeks may be terribly important, but the real name of the game is "Sell the Army."

Under these circumstances, anything less than superior is hopelessly unsatisfactory. Illusions shatter quickly. One Pithecanthropoid platoon sergeant, with his knuckles dustin' the ground, can sour a whole parade ground full of peppy proselytes before sunset on the first day.

From the moment they set foot on Government property, rookies should look right down the barrel at the best the Army's got -- pugnaciously professional troop leaders, precision, efficiency and bull whip discipline.

Ask any of 'em.

They expect it.

* Author's italics.

Stephen B. Ailes, patron saint of NCO's and Under Secretary of the Army in 1963, was determined they should get it. After looking into this military mare's nest, he lit half a dozen fires.⁹

As a starter, U.S. Continental Army Command (USCONARC) whipped up a standard organization for all seven Basic Combat Training Centers*, which pointed everyone down the same path, and -- for the first time -- gave the Army a handle on quality control, geared to rigid, minimum standards.¹⁰

USATC priorities catapulted into second place, "just below first-line major overseas units and on-site air defense units" at home.¹¹

Commissioned leadership slots from platoon through brigade level were to be filled only "by officers of the grade specified in the Table of Distribution." Shavetails, who had comprised "as many as two thirds of (all) Lieutenants assigned to Training Centers," were limited to a ceiling of 25 percent.¹²

With the shift in emphasis, officer promotion boards began to equate USATC assignments with tactical troop duty, from the standpoint of career development -- a cultural revolution. The CONARC staff personally briefed every senior officer enroute to BCT assignments; Majors and company grades attended a mandatory two-week orientation, based on Drill Sergeant (DS) Schools.¹⁴

Drill Sergeants? This sounded like somethin' new.

* Then Forts Dix, Gordon, Jackson, Knox, Leonard Wood, Ord and Polk.¹³ Pressures from Vietnam later forced other installations into the act.

It wasn't.

After 189 years of training troops, red-faced Army leaders finally swallowed their pride, and spuriously began to plagiarize whole pages from the Marine Corps' book.* Army Training Centers suddenly assumed the air of genteel Boot Camps, with pseudo-Marine standards, Marine-like methods and many Marine techniques. Drill Sergeants, resplendent in special uniforms and insignia and the "Old Army's" cocky campaign hat, looked suspiciously like Marine D.I.'s, who've stood just under 11 feet tall since 1775.

Who cares? These gents were a breath of fresh air.

Each training company was allocated an even dozen -- three to a platoon -- and to guarantee nothing but the best, DA directed overseas commands to identify and report outstanding non-commissioned leaders and instructors who were scheduled to rotate home. Physical fitness, emotional stability and sabre-sharp military bearing were mandatory (no over-hanging bellies, please); the age limit 39. E-4's were eligible only if in promotable status. No one with less than 15 months retainability was even considered.¹⁵⁻¹⁶

For those selected, Third Army's NCO Academy lashed up a highly competitive, demanding five-week Drill Sergeant Course that really put the lads through the mill -- stressing fundamentals of troop handling and basic training skills. Diplomas cost an academic average of 70 percent and at least 300 points on the Physical Fitness

* Department of the Army action officers vigorously deny this. Similarities may be purely coincidental.

Test. A quarter of the pilot class washed out, but 71 leathery go-getters graduated at Fort Jackson on 27 June 1964, showing others the way.^{17-18*}

A panel of three Army officers, hat in hand, then converged on the USMC Recruit Training Depot at Parris Island, South Carolina for a complete briefing on operations and aims, with special attention to "that portion of Marine instruction which....instills esprit."¹⁹ Last-minute adjustments were made.

Amid much fanfare, a full-dress rehearsal was held in October 1964 for the Right Honorable Ailes, by then Secretary of the Army, and his entourage: the Commanding General of Third Army; CONARC's Deputy Chief of Staff for Individual Training; and (naturellement) the Acting Chief of Information. They were duly impressed. What they saw was a real going Jesse.²⁰

Just to make sure we hadn't dropped a stitch, 10 high-powered Drill Sergeants made a pilgrimage to the Parris Island finishing school, to take advantage of Marine experience in -- of all things! -- drill, discipline, physical training, wearing of the uniform and marksmanship.²¹ Living noncoms were embarrassed²²; Sergeant York must have turned in his grave.

SFC Butters, Number 2 graduate in an 83-man class, found the eight-week USMC course "very tough and very thorough," concerned with

* Each Army Area presently has at least one Drill Sergeant School, located at Forts Dix, Jackson, McClellan, Bliss, Polk, Leonard Wood, Knox, Ord and Lewis. Standards still are high. In autumn 1966 fewer than 73 percent of all candidates were able to make the grade.²⁵ The course now is six weeks long to permit additional marksmanship training.²⁶

minute detail. All of the Army NCO's did well, thriving on competition so keen that the group average was the highest scored in over three years. Ten more guinea pigs graduated in May, and like the pathfinders, were posted as instructors at D.S. Schools.²³⁻²⁴

The program quickly shifted into high gear, and was off in a gust of dust. It looked like a certain winner.

Now, as then, D.S. responsibilities range widely, in the true tradition of non-commissioned leadership. Drill Sergeants prepare lesson plans, arrange for training aids and supervise rehearsals before pitching 232 hours of formal instruction. They act as assistants for 120 more (Figure 17).²⁷ They schedule and conduct make-up training during Commander's Time or on week-ends; maintain individual Trainee records; monitor performance and evaluate progress; polish the talented and push slow learners; and recommend the unfit, unsuitable or unresponsive for re-cycling or elimination. Throughout, they act as combination Headmaster and Father Confessor for all aspirants under their spell.²⁸

In addition, Drill Sergeants pull hum-drum NCO duties like Charge of Quarters every 12 days, Sergeant of the Guard two or three times per cycle, week-end courtesy patrols, Staff or Battalion NCO, and so on. When cadre strengths are down, they are even busier boys.²⁹

SFC Harold D. Whitesides, Honor Graduate from the first D.S. class at Fort Jackson, figures 80-85 hours a week just about did it from the time he took a clutch of civilians under his wing at the Reception Center until he dismissed them as soldiers two months later.³⁰ This pattern hasn't changed.



5. Fort Jackson Drill Sergeant shows the way. "Old Army" campaign hat is the Badge of Honor.

To maintain peak proficiency, DA decreed that Drill Sergeants "filling Table of Distribution positions are equal in priority to Vietnam, and are to be stabilized on the job for 18 months."³¹ Center Commanders originally extended the top 20 percent to a full two years -- long enough to dazzle eight or ten cycles without gettin' punchy, yet short enough to prevent the Law of Diminishing Returns from spoiling the show. Liberal leave policies try to keep all batteries charged.³²

As a tangible, meaningful reward, departing Drill Sergeants, initially, at least, were permitted to choose their next assignments "to the maximum extent practicable," and even today frequently are sent on their way with a fleck of green and white ribbon displayed proudly on the chest.³³

By the summer of 1966, General Westmoreland, writing from Vietnam, was able to report that "officers and men connected with the CONUS Army training base are performing a major task in an outstanding manner....The Drill Sergeants, the military instructors, the unit commanders, and those who plan programs of instruction and training cycles deserve the credit and they have the admiration of this command" (Figure 18).³⁴

More recently, President Johnson, addressing troops at Cam Ranh Bay, announced "that no armed forces anywhere, at any time.... were up to the group we have in Vietnam now. You are the best prepared; you are the most skilled."³⁵

A far cry from 1956.

But as he spoke, there were disquieting signs of trouble in Paradise.

During FY 66, large-scale commitment of U.S. ground forces in Vietnam hoisted the average USATC Trainee population from a modest 105,500 to 157,000; experts estimated 218,500 for the following fiscal year. Drill Sergeant requirements expanded by 40 percent in 1966 alone. Input simply couldn't keep up:³⁷

	<u>D.S. Authorized</u>	<u>D.S. On Hand</u>	<u>Shortage</u>
31 Dec 65	5,286	3,068	2,218
30 Jun 66	7,915	5,061	2,458
31 Dec 66	8,594	7,603	991

In retaliation, Fort Dix inaugurated the first Drill Corporal course in November 1965. The idea rapidly spread. As a stop-gap measure, it really was great, but planners soon lost their heads. One year after Secretary Ailes' retainers conceded that "the sure way to defeat the program is to award the title of 'Drill Sergeant' to marginal personnel," candidates direct from AIT zipped through Drill Corporal sessions, put in five OJT cycles wiping Draftee noses with their parent training brigade, then headed for D.S. School.³⁸⁻³⁹

Even so, at Fort Jackson, where it all began, BCT units were short 51 Drill Sergeants in the autumn of 1966.⁴⁰ Artillery Majors had begun to replace Lieutenant Colonels of infantry in the 1st Training Brigade. A third of the fire-eating Captains who once chocked all 60 training companies passed the torch to golden-barred Second Johns.^{41*}

* With regard to officers, BCT companies at Fort Dix were about 25 percent understrength in January 1967; half were commanded by Lieutenants.⁴⁴

One disheartened Battalion Commander, who arrived in June of '65, initially was blessed with a full house of "magnificent NCO's, worthy in every way of the name."⁴² By January 1967, his six BCT companies had "lost 21 Drill Sergeants, and received five replacements, none of (whom) had an infantry MOS. One (had to be reduced), another (was) pending disciplinary action for AWOL." Drill Corporals, grade Private E-2, sorely diluted the mixture. Out of 16 assigned to the battalion, the Sergeant Major deemed that only "six are acceptable for the program."⁴³

In consequence, the Center began consolidating some classes. Military justice, previously given the personal touch by platoon Drill Sergeants, was watched by recruits "on 16 TV sets in a theater.... Achievements and traditions, which we used to jazz up, now are on tapes," narrated by an AG Lieutenant wearing a National Defense Service Ribbon, instead of the Battalion Commander with his DSC. "All of it," he ventured, "means we are creeping away from something that was starting to pay dividends."⁴⁵

He was lucky. Elsewhere, recession no longer was creeping; it had already started to crawl.

Every Army Training Center in the country was short qualified Drill Sergeants. Not just a few, but a lot: 256 at Bragg; 277 at Campbell; 247 at Fort Leonard Wood; 222 at Fort Lewis. Such gaps hit 30 to 40 percent (Figure 19).⁴⁶

Despite adversity, DA tried hard not to pull in its horns. Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson was fighting the problem just as

hard as the men in the field. By January 1967, requirements had started to level off. Blooded combat veteran noncoms were returning from Vietnam. Drill Sergeant Schools had proved they could really produce. Other things being equal, the get well date was scheduled for July 1967, when supply again would equal demand.⁴⁸

Hopefully, it may have been darkest just before the dawn. Time will tell.

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Beyond basic training, there's a crying need to identify potential enlisted leaders early, and to ensure them progressively professional development as they proceed from Corporal's chevrons toward Sergeant Major's stars.

In some respects, the Army is making definite progress; in others, it is definitely not.

Let's look at the bright side first.

After three centuries of letting the NCO Corp grow like Topsy - since the Colonies first mustered militias - George Washington University's Human Resources Research Office (HumRRO), under USCONARC guidance, launched a long-range, tripartite project, which loomed officially under the lack-luster title "Research on the Training of Non-Commissioned Officers," but commonly was known as "Task NCO." The mission was to open up a pool of outstanding enlisted leaders.⁴⁹

NCO I, which initiated a number of exploratory studies in 1956, culminated in four published memoranda compiling junior NCO

attributes and duties.⁵⁰ One, A Guide for the Infantry Squad Leader, was used as a textbook for the next stage.⁵¹

NCO II followed up, evolving experimental training methods and techniques: measuring devices, time phasing, statistical analyses, correlation matrices, and the like.⁵²

NCO III, which began in 1959 as a two-year field test of leadership training programs, actually slopped over into 1966. The final HumRRO technical report still is not off the press, but from the very first, its Leader Preparation Course was digging in pay dirt.⁵³

Researchers played with three variations.

INTEGRATED was the first to be tried.

Potential NCO's ear-marked during Basic Combat Training, were installed as acting squad leaders, platoon guides and assistant platoon sergeants for the succeeding eight weeks of AIT, without prior preparation. Special classes in leadership, human relations, methods of instruction, map reading and weapons were sandwiched in. This approach saved time and money, but failed to do the job.⁵⁴

RECYCLE was somewhat more successful.

Hot rocks were isolated during Advanced Individual Training, after they'd had more time to shape up, and were held over two full months as Acting Jacks for the following class. Unfortunately, preliminary training again was administered on an impromptu, spare-time basis. Equally pertinent, in an era of penny-pinching, RECYCLE was hardly cost effective.⁵⁵

SHORT COURSE, which prevailed, was a clever compromise. Its two capsulized weeks of force-fed leadership instruction took place at the end of BCT.⁵⁶

Attendance was highly selective. Peer ratings, records checks and commanders' evaluations normally eliminated 950 or more from a basic training cycle of 1,000. Personal interviews followed, wherein shy lads were summarily scotched.⁵⁷⁻⁵⁸

Survivors consistently were well above average in age, maturity, experience and test scores. A strong majority were amateur athletes, many of whom wore school letters; a quarter had been team captains. These cock-sure crews really were something to work with.⁵⁹

With modifications, such as evaluation by Drill Sergeants, SHORT COURSE is steaming full speed ahead today,⁶⁰ under conditions of considerable urgency.

But beyond this point, directed progress almost stops.

Once he sews on his first chevrons, the average Noncom can look forward to four weeks formal NCO training in a 30-year career.⁶¹⁻⁶²

He's lucky to get that. There are specialist schools out the gazoo, but until 1949, when Brigadier General Bruce C. Clarke founded the U.S. Constabulary's Academy in Munich Germany,* there was nothing at all for NCO's.⁶³

This concept boomed 'round the world, under Clarke's watchful eye. By 1959, there were 17 academies in CONUS alone, from division

* Now the highly-regarded Seventh U.S. Army NCO Academy at Flint Kaserne in Bad Tölz, Germany.

to army level, graduating 180,000 students a year.⁶⁴ In every instance, the avowed purpose was to lever enlisted leaders up on their hind legs with enough self-confidence "to look, act and think likenon-commissioned officers."⁶⁵

These institutions originally did a whale of a job, but along the way, they got too big for their britches. Once they got the John L. Sullivan complex, and offered to whip every sonofabitch in the house, they began to take some frightful beatings.

DA guidance, or rather the lack thereof, is the culpable cause.

The only Army Regulation addressed to the matter is 10 years old. There are no changes. Within a very general framework, commanders of divisions or major installations are "authorized, but not required, to establish a Non-Commissioned Officer Academy."⁶⁶

Standardization is zilch, except in ephemeral terms.

Each command supports its provincial effort from available resources.⁶⁷ In response, some schools, commanded by a Brigadier General* or full Colonel, may glisten with enough instructional paraphernalia to make the sweat pop out on Atlas, while poor relations, deaned by a Second Lieutenant, make do with Rube Goldberg mockups in an abandoned messhall.⁶⁸ One accommodates 20 pupils, another 12 times that many.⁶⁹ Some have consumed 16 full weeks, others only two. All receive equal credit, a point which bears remembering,

* None today. Bruce Clarke was a Commandant as a Brigadier.

for "The Regulation" specifically forbids any graduate of a recognized NCO Academy ever to attend another!^{70*}

Diversity of facilities and standards produces kaleidoscope results, even though curricula pretty generally conform to the same rather narrow mold (Figure 20).⁷¹

Many schools offer scant challenge. HumRRO researchers found that graduates in the mid-1950's scorned "refresher courses" for which "no study time was needed, except in preparation for student talks." Leadership training, as she was taught, tended to be "inspirational, rather than informative," although admittedly this was "virtually the only instruction in many of the academy programs that clearly.... (recognized) students as being non-commissioned leaders." Little time was allocated to teaching supervisory skills or responsibilities as such. On-the-job training was practiced at only one installation visited; even there, it was marginally effective, "rarely (being) accompanied by any more than normal duty guidance and supervision."⁷²

In short, courses almost universally sought high standards of appearance at the expense of military knowledge. Too many squandered precious time on unedifying pursuits like blocking tee-shirts for Academy footlocker displays and polishing belt-buckle backs for Saturday morning inspections. Students needed 27 sets of starched fatigues for a lesson in sartorial elegance.

* This stipulation is frequently ignored. Numerous senior NCO's have attended three or four academies. One luckless Sergeant at Fort Benning in 1962 had suffered through seven.⁷³

Part of this problem derived directly from unrealistic entrance prerequisites established by local commanders.⁷⁴

Admission to sought-after schools, like the one serving forces throughout Third Army, initially required "each nominee (to appear) before a board of officers at his home station -- to ascertain whether he might keep pace and meet the exacting standards."⁷⁵

This approach didn't last long.

Fixed quotas and misplaced emphasis soon dragooned pupils into each class, regardless of qualifications or desire.⁷⁶

Third Army in 1960 reported "attitudes of incoming students vary from bitterness to complacency. A small percentage arrive determined to advance professionally, but they are counteracted by an equal percentage with completely negative or hostile attitudes. The Academy therefore (must place) an active motivation program in effect from the very first day."⁷⁷

Seventh Army, on the other side of the drink, faces similar dilemmas today. Its constituents, "by and large, are good soldiers, but we do get some real duds in every class....Perhaps some units are having to scrape the bottom of the barrel in order to meet their quotas."⁷⁸

Add incredible heterogeneity, stir well, and you concoct an indigestible mess.

Despite DA's timid suggestion that perhaps, after all, "consideration should be given to conducting separate courses for senior non-commissioned officers and for non-commissioned officer candidates," such has not been the case.⁷⁹

Disparities among student bodies are huge, in age, grade, MOS, experience, education, intellect, motivation, leadership and length of service. Teen-age nurses' aides, for whom military life thus far has been confined to emptying bed pans in an air-conditioned hospital, compete with chevron-festooned veterans of 20 years in the field.⁸⁰ As late as 1966, nearly 80 percent of all students at the Seventh Army NCO Academy were specialists, rather than NCO's; nearly three quarters were from dissimilar technical services.⁸¹

In consequence, HumRRO found, instructors over the years have "perceived it to be their responsibility to gear the level of instruction to the slowest student."⁸² Depending on local policies and standards, washout rates have varied from 3 to 33 percent.⁸³

Understandably, numerous superior noncoms eschew these expensive, time-consuming schools which promise scant professional remuneration in return.

A random sample of one Stateside airborne infantry battalion in 1964 disclosed that only 62 of its 163 Sergeants ever had attended an NCO academy of any kind. None of its Corporals had gone. Put this group under the scope, and you discover that some of the sheepskins were over a decade old. A dozen men had snuck into fairly reputable schools, but more than a third had to be content with shoe-string affairs at home or abroad.⁸⁴

This may be fairly representative.

The 1/35th Infantry Battalion, 25th Infantry Division -- credited with a record string of consecutive days combat in Vietnam --

had 194 noncoms assigned in October 1966, grades E-5 through E-9. Just 27 had graduated from a recognized NCO academy; half the diplomas were from division schools, where the facilities had been mighty thin. Even granting failure of absent-minded clerks to post some Enlisted Qualification Records, the percentage was shockingly low.⁸⁵ The 125th Signal Battalion, in the same Division, was a little better off, with 23 graduates out of 110 noncoms assigned,⁸⁶ but during the same time frame, the adjacent 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, strength 5,165, fielded a mere 200 NCO Academy degrees.⁸⁷

Clearly, Bruce Clarke's sagacious concept had drifted far astray.

Toright the Fallen Idol, crusaders at The Infantry School in 1962 solicited thoughts from large numbers of practicing noncoms within The Infantry Center, 2d Infantry Division and XVIII Airborne Corps, using "a formidable array of interviews and forums" as a platform.⁸⁸

Since the men who pay the piper were calling the tune for a change, the resultant study made lots of common sense.

In place of the present non-commissioned Little Red School House, these men recommended a troika-like system comprising elementary, high school and collegiate levels.⁸⁹

Academies, as they now exist, were to serve non-commissioned officer candidates, grade E-4 and below, emphasizing five and dime skills required of all junior noncoms, regardless of branch or service.⁹⁰

Intermediate education, findings suggested, could best be supplied by career courses, conducted for E-5's and E-6's by the respective branches -- not specialist training, but comprehensive surveys, giving a feel for actions across each chosen board.⁹¹

The pièce de résistance was to be a single, magnificent NCO College, the pinnacle of all enlisted learning, within whose hallowed halls selected E-7's and E-8's would gird their loins to take over as top dog in command posts or headquarters all the way from company to field army (Figure 21). Admittance to this 12-15 week course for First Sergeants and Sergeants Major, all agreed, should be limited to truly outstanding enlisted leaders with 14 or more years service and a secondary school diploma. In this rarified atmosphere, quotas were definitely out. Commanders' needs weigh heavily, but final selection must rest with Department of the Army.⁹²

Part of this dream has come true, within the Continental United States, at least.

Where all NCO Academies heretofore have been installed on a "pay your money and take your choice" basis, USCONARC on 15 January 1965 directed each Army Area Commander to establish one; CONARC foots the bill. This single move should go a long way toward fostering reasonable uniformity. Local commanders may fritter away time, money and personnel resources on additional schools if they wish, but all such costs come out of their own pockets.⁹³

CONARC hasn't restricted its academies to junior NCO's, but wherever practicable now offers two separate courses: one for E-3's

and E-4's, the other for grades through Staff Sergeant. In cases where basic classes have been disregarded or discontinued because of unsatisfactory input, outstanding Corporals and Specialists Fourth Class may join senior groups by waiver.⁹⁴ Unfortunately, the courses vary only slightly, in degree rather than in substance, conforming to Army policy (Figure 20).⁹⁵⁻⁹⁶ This reactionary stand won't do much to dispel long-standing complaints that academies are naught but refreshers.*

All thoughts of resident career courses and a senior NCO College temporarily have been shelved. In 1965, USCONARC boldly promulgated a Sergeants Major prep school, which was to have convened at Fort Leavenworth's Command and General Staff College (C&GSC), but the project was knocked in the head by General Johnson, owing to shortages of instructors, facilities and funds.⁹⁸⁻⁹⁹ At the behest of the 1966 Senior Command Sergeants Major Conference, a renewed bid is under study.¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, 18 of the Army's 21 branch schools are beginning to offer career development correspondence courses for conscientious NCO's -- the last will be running full bore by 1 July 1967 -- and CONARC has cooked up a C&GSC-level affair for the top two grades.¹⁰¹ All of this means well, but it may not prove too practical. For

* As an aside, OCS Commandants, at their discretion, now may award full credit for either the senior or basic NCO course to enlisted men who complete seven weeks of Officer Candidate School before flunking out -- a practice not likely to educe much respect or enthusiasm among old-line NCO's.⁹⁷

Stateside noncoms caught up in a 15-hour day (let alone for those in combat), extension courses, even accompanied by organized "group study," are a poor substitute for resident instruction.

Nevertheless, like the castaway's skinny and nagging wife, school by mail may not be much, but it has to be better than nothing.

FIGURE 17
 SCHEDULE OF INSTRUCTION
 BASIC COMBAT TRAINING

<u>Drill Sergeant Responsibility</u>		<u>Committee Responsibility</u>	
<u>Subject</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Hours</u>
Achievement & Tradition	2	First Aid	6
Military Courtesy	3	CBR	2
Character Guidance	4	Hand Grenades	2
Code of Conduct	2	Marksmanship	79
Military Justice	2	Close Combat	4
Troop Information	1	Infiltration Course	3
Drill & Ceremonies	40	Combat Firing	4
Inspections	28	Indiv Tac Tng*	11
Intelligence Training	2	Military Justice	<u>1</u>
Physical Training	29	Total	112
Counterinsurgency	1		
Marches & Bivouacs	32		
Commander's Time	24		
Admin Processing	26		
Guard Duty	4		
CBR	2		
Field Sanitation	2		
Hand-to-Hand Combat	10		
Bayonet & Pugil Stick	12		
Hand Grenades	2		
Mechanical Training (Rifle)	4		
Total	<u>232</u>		

<u>USATC G-3 Responsibility</u>	
<u>Subject</u>	<u>Hours</u>
Proficiency Testing	8

* Individual Tactical Training

FIGURE 18

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96307



AVC

3 July 1966

Dear General Johnson,

Since the first of January 1966, this command has received 63,973 Army replacements; approximately one-third of these men were recent graduates of the Army training system. All of the replacements were products of the Army training base with many having attended various MOS courses. I am both proud and pleased to inform you that the military proficiency, the elan, and the combat readiness of these men are of the highest order and represent a new plateau of achievement in the history of the Army.

Most of the men who arrive as individual replacements have received 8 weeks of Basic Combat Training and 8 weeks of Advanced Individual Training with an additional week of counterinsurgency oriented training for those who come from Forts Polk and Gordon. I have found these soldiers, without exception, to be highly motivated, confident in their equipment, physically fit for the rigors of this climate and the geography, and enthusiastically eager to make their contribution to win in Vietnam. A representative sampling discloses that, exclusive of the Purple Heart, 5% of these replacements have already received awards for heroism and other recognition for extraordinary performance of duty.

It is evident everywhere I go that the officers and men connected with the CONUS Army training base are performing a major task in an outstanding manner. The Army training centers, the several service schools, and Continental Army Command have every right to point with pride to the accomplishments in the Republic of Vietnam; these accomplishments are a reflection of their achievements and the results of their labors. The Drill Sergeants, the military instructors, the unit commanders, and those who plan programs of instruction and training cycles deserve the credit and they have the admiration of this command.

I request that you convey my respect and deepest appreciation to the officers and men of the Army training base who are responsible for the military proficiency of the young replacements arriving in RVN. It is truly a response that is in the finest tradition of the United States Army.

Warm regards.

Sincerely,

W. C. WESTMORELAND
General, US Army
Commanding

General Harold K. Johnson
Chief of Staff, U.S. Army
Washington, D. C. 20310

AUGUST 1966

FIGURE 19
DRILL SERGEANT STATUS REPORT
7 October 1966

<u>USATC</u>	<u>D.S. AUTHORIZED</u>	<u>D.S. ON HAND</u>	<u>SHORTAGE</u>
Benning	734	693	41
Bliss	494	410	84
Bragg	614	358	256
Campbell	614	337	277
Dix	629	466	163
Gordon	494	455	39
Jackson	774	723	51
Knox	752	616	136
Leonard Wood	746	499	247
Lewis	624	402	222
Ord	625	476	149
Polk	755	634	121
Sam Houston	<u>24</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>12</u>
Total	7,879	6,081	1,798

FIGURE 20

NCO ACADEMY MANDATORY SUBJECTS

As Prescribed by Department of the Army

AR 350-90

(Minimum Duration Four Weeks; No Maximum)

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Minimum Hours</u>
Methods of Instruction	30
Map Reading	20
Leadership	15
Drill, Ceremonies & Command (Includes Customs of the Service, Physical Training and Inspections)	15
Weapons	NA
Tactics	NA
Problems of Command	<u>NA</u>
Total	80

As Prescribed by U.S. Continental Army Command

USCONARC Reg 350-51

(Minimum Duration Five Weeks; Maximum Six Weeks)

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Minimum Hours</u>	
	<u>Basic Course</u>	<u>Senior Course</u>
Methods of Instruction	36	31
Map Reading	31	26
Leadership (Includes Drill, Physical Training and General Subjects)	89	84
Weapons	10	7
Tactics	22	40
Problems of Command	<u>17</u>	<u>17</u>
Total	205	205

FIGURE 21

PROPOSED NCO COLLEGE CURRICULUM

MANDATORY SUBJECTS

(Based on 1962 Infantry School Survey of Non-Commissioned Officers)

Psychology of Leadership

Army Organization

General and Special Staff Functions

Weapons and Ammunition

Advanced Tactics

Administration

Military Writing

Preventive Maintenance, Emphasizing Inspection Techniques

Advanced Military Law

Parliamentary Procedures

Customs and Traditions of the Service

Protocol and Social Etiquette

Additional Subjects to be Determined