

PART II. THE MIDDLE AGES

CHAPTER II -- TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

In the Kingdom of the Blind,
The one-eyed man is king.

Arab Proverb.

The enlisted pot suddenly boiled over like unattended tapioca, as the tiny, pre-war Regular Army inflated 40-fold from 187,000 in 1939 to over 8,000,000 by mid-1945.¹ The disgruntled vanguard of Guardsmen and Draftees, initially called up for a year or less at the convenience of the Government,² was reinforced by wave after prodigious wave of callow Christmas help, following the Jap attack on Pearl Harbor. The accession rate crested at three and a half million men during 270 incredible days in 1942-43 -- over 514,000 one month, more than triple the "Old Army's" total enlisted strength. Fewer than one half of one percent were volunteers after 1942 (Figure 6).³

Shaping a competent NCO Corps from this amorphous mass would have beggared the Labors of Hercules if it had taken place under glass.

Which it didn't.

It couldn't. There was no cohesive plan. No purpose, no program, no priorities nor plausible goals.

Without a staunch and vocal champion, the Army's enlisted leaders were served after all other plates were filled -- swabbies,

gyrenes and goggled air cadets. Direct commissions. Officer candidates. Administrators. Semi-civilian schoolboys. Plus more than a million button pushers who picked the platter clean.

MAKE NO MISTAKE. THIS CHRONIC DEARTH OF KEEN MANPOWER WAS ENOUGH TO RUIN THE CORPS.

Unhappily, there was more.

The ratio of noncoms to Privates ballooned a whopping 25 percent at the very time Adjutants already were shaking the trees to meet their most modest needs (Figures 1 and 7).⁴

To keep pace with spiraling demands, War Department wags then released the brakes on promotions. Predictably, duds who wouldn't go off if you hit 'em with a hammer made their fortunes over night.

And finally, to cap it all, policy-makers cynically abandoned half-formed new noncoms to bush-league on-the-job training, where the halt often tutored the blind. Arrested professional development was the unavoidable result.

By early 1943, with global warfare looming large, the impoverished NCO Corps was balled up like Hogan's horny goat. Surveying the wanton wreckage from his vantage point on high, hard-bitten warrior Ben Lear fearfully predicted, "we will pay for this dearly in battle."⁵

He was absolutely right.

* * * * *

The fateful winnowing process, which produced non-commissioned chaff, was cumulative and nearly complete.

To begin with, the Army got less than an equitable share of the nation's flowering youth. For the first year of the war, both the bell-bottomed Navy and its fancy pants Marines relied exclusively on volunteers, and thus could pick and choose. They were forced to discontinue this practice on 1 February 1943, but even when saddled with Selective Service, preserved a marked advantage, because their induction standards were high. The sprawling, glamourless Army simply never was able to vie.⁶

So much for circumstances beyond effective control.

Maladroit handling of manpower received was the principal source of woe. Appreciation for the catastrophe which quite literally obliterated the once-vaunted NCO Corps early in the war depends heavily on concomitant knowledge of classification and assignment procedures that, to a very high degree, then determined men's Army careers.

To place round pegs in circular holes, three indices were used -- physical ability, intellectual capacity and occupational skill. Each, in its way, was important, but brainpower was the key.

Intelligence, experience and ability to learn universally were measured by the much-maligned Army General Classification Test (AGCT),⁷ a comprehensive exam, which habitually was foisted off on bleary-eyed, hung-over, distracted and generally indifferent recruits on their very first day away from home. Results were subject to wide interpretation, but by rote were assigned great weight.

Numerical scores were grouped into five categories, whose boundaries were crisply defined on paper, but were exceedingly vague in fact:^{8*}

Class I	130 or above
Class II	110 to 129
Class III	90-109
Class IV	70-89
Class V	69 and below

The top two brackets were win and place; there wasn't any show. They were the fount of all commissioned officers, and the intended source of fine NCO's.⁹

The system naturally was fallible -- there's always the erudite idiot, mouthing mathematical matrices and Mendel's Law, who couldn't find his way out of the Men's Room without a guide -- but all-in-all, the AGCT afforded an acceptably accurate method of separating sheep from gung-ho goats.

Competition for Class "A" manpower was inescapably fierce. "After you, Gaston" manners almost immediately gave way to an elbowing, butting, thumb-in-the-eye, knee-in-the-groin, Dogpatch-style Donnybrook, wherein the Army Air Forces (AAF), the Army Service Forces (ASF) and the ground combat arms (AGF) locked in vicious, pitched battles more costly than those fought with Axis foes.

Given the advantage of prudent management, incoming raw materials could have covered all reasonable needs. But this was not to be. Responsible leaders initially professed a policy of proportionate

* During 12 months ending 28 February 1942, 713,000 Draftees established the following curve: Class I, 8 percent; Class II, 29 percent; Class III, 30 percent; Class IV, 21 percent; Class V, 12 percent.

distribution,¹⁰ but before the war was three months old, harassed and under duress, they bowed to parochial Service politics, which peevishly disregarded the panoramic view. In consequence, AGF fought for survival, while the Air Forces wallowed in waste.

This pattern emerged as early as February 1942, when, by War Department decree, three fourths of all Caucasian males funneled to the AAF were drawn from AGCT Classes I and II, and the upper half of III; without exception, these men had scores of 100 or more.¹¹

Ground commanders may not have grinned, but they bore this crippling blow in aggravated silence, until it became painfully evident that programs for developing small unit leaders were all but paralyzed. To avoid catastrophe, Lt Gen McNair, Chief of the AGF, protested formally, and Lt Gen Somervell, head of the Services of Supply, strongly backed him up.¹²

After protracted squabbling, the 75 percent rule was waived in July 1942, but surcease was short-lived. General H.H. Arnold, Commander of the Army Air Forces, went straight to the Chief of Staff.¹³

The royal mash which followed was a clear case of "I understand your problem, but...."

McNair stubbornly argued that demands for "high grade and intelligent enlisted men as combat leaders....counterbalance needs of the Air Forces for enlisted technicians," but impending commitment of air power in Europe tipped the scale. Arnold's views prevailed.¹⁴

Reinstated preferential treatment for the fly boys was worse than ever before. During autumn 1942, the AAF netted 150,000 red-hots with scores of 100 or better, not just on the AGCT, but on Mechanical Aptitude Tests as well. This hit below the belt. Something like one half of all recruits batted that well on one exam or the other, but only a third registered 100 or more on both.¹⁵

At this juncture, Parkinson's Law took hold -- Air Force demands expanded to accomodate surplus supply.

The Inspector General, poking about at air bases across the country, discovered that more than a third of the Privates were luckless lads from AGCT Classes I and II. Over half of these malassigned geniuses were "messengers, warehousemen, clerks, guards, orderlies, truck drivers, firemen and assistant cooks." Wails of righteous anguish arose from the Ground Forces, and on 13 November 1942, the IG recommended that such unjustifiable wet nursing of the AAF come to a screeching halt.¹⁶

He might as well have addressed a blank wall. Personnel preference rules favoring the AAF were prolonged, this time until June '43. The preponderance of whiz kids dropped to 55 percent, but results were substantially the same.¹⁷

The tide began to turn perceptibly later on that year, but shake all 12 months up in a hat, and the 1943 scoreboard still looked like this:¹⁸

	<u>AAF</u>	<u>ASF</u>	<u>AGF</u>
CL I-II	247,141 (41.7%)	348,553 (36.5%)	308,180 (29.7%)
CL III	185,489 (31.3%)	271,746 (28.5%)	345,720 (33.3%)
CL IV-V	<u>159,282 (27.0%)</u>	<u>334,294 (35.0%)</u>	<u>382,596 (37.0%)</u>
TOTAL	591,912 (100.0%)	954,593 (100.0%)	1,036,496 (100.0%)

Understand, now, that nearly a quarter of a million aviation cadets never were involved in the hassle outlined above.¹⁹ These buckos were inducted independently, and throughout the entire mobilization period, gravel crunchers already assigned to ground units were free to volunteer as aviation cadets, if they could meet the standards. Washouts were retained exclusively by the AAF. In summer 1943, for example, the 44th Infantry Division lost 1,800 top layer men who almost certainly would have become squad leaders or platoon sergeants in combat; not a single one returned.²⁰

This brain drain was no joke. Stripped to its skivvies and shivering in the snow, the Army proper was hard pressed to dredge up enough commissioned officers, let alone able NCO's (Figure 8).²¹

Idealistically high OCS criteria complicated the problem. Ninety-five percent of the first classes in July 1941 comprised Regular Army Warrants and Sergeants, but they weren't good enough - reports reaching Washington suggested that ambivalent commanders were jealously shielding their best noncoms from the pitfalls of OCS. To be sure, they sent some fine ones, but these were mingled with flops.²²⁻²³

The War Department didn't brook such foolishness for long. An infuriated G-1 recommended disciplinary action, if necessary, to

ensure desired results. Chief of Staff Marshall concurred, and on 26 February 1942, he dispatched a scathing letter to the field. Ante up. Blue chips only in the pot.²⁴

With pressures like this brought to bear, the system quickly broke down. Blue chips were soon gone, forcing great minds in the Pentagon to revise unrealistic rules.

Combat arms Officer Candidate Schools, for example, originally turned out rock-hard platoon commanders -- nothing more. Mothers' boys were chopped off at the hip pockets.²⁵ But by June, AGF got the ungarnished word: "produce good administrators from those who lack combat leadership qualities." Candidates were sacked only if judged unfit for the least inspiring commissioned chores.²⁶

Nice try, but no cigar. The quality of OCS input continued to decline, as the last units were bereft of outstanding NCO's and other eligible fodder. Despite all efforts to maintain the pace, failures at Fort Benning shot up from 1.9 to more than 17 percent in the space of eight brief months. This trend was repeated monotonously in other Ground Forces schools.²⁷

The case of Private John Martin Collins, 17046822, serves to illustrate the officer candidate crisis in the summer of '42.

This introverted, ineffectual youth was a sickly two-time high school drop-out, whose report cards reflected more days absent than present. Once an indolent, irresponsible member of the Pre-Koffa Teamster Brotherhood, he'd sporadically unloaded freight in the Kansas City Railway Terminal when the spirit moved him. His application for OCS

was vaguely motivated by fuzzy-minded patriotism -- but his overweening incentive was the traumatic experience of pearl-diving armpit deep in a grease-clogged set tub from 3 o'clock in the morning 'til well after 11 at night as a kitchen policeman in Jefferson Barracks' Consolidated Mess.

The Lieutenant, Company Commander recognized that this child was scarcely able to feed and clothe himself, let alone command a 45-man platoon. His indorsement, which will repose in the Hall of Records until Gabriel blows his horn, says simply:

"1. Not recommended,

2.This candidate....has neither demonstrated perceptible ability to lead men, nor given indication that leadership can be developed....He is as yet unable to inspire or impress his subordinates and associates to a degree that will assure that he is officer material.

3.

SIGNED
Robert H. Hall
1st Lieutenant"

But underneath, in neat black letters, was a one-line rebuttal: "Recommended for Officer Candidate School," signed by a harassed Colonel of Infantry who had a quota to fill. He took the coward's way out.²⁸

This deplorable situation was aggravated by the Army Specialized Training Program, a Loch Ness-type apparition, which reared its frightful head late in '42 and ran a destructive course for over a year before it finally came unglued.

Essentially, ASTP was a ploy to ensure the Army a continuous flow of men conversant in much-needed professions -- medicine, engineering, linguistics and the sciences -- and coincidentally, to shore up colleges and universities teetering on the ragged edge of disaster when, as anticipated, the minimum Draft age dropped from 20 to 18.²⁹

The aims were certainly laudable, but the cost was anathema to commanders: 150,000 pink-cheeked lads with AGCT scores of at least 115, 5 points greater than the marks needed to get into OCS.³⁰

When this bombshell hit, the Ground Forces already were 300,000 men short, and were frenziedly beating the bushes for enough passable noncoms to stock four or five new divisions every month.³¹

Instead of kicking the program off in Reception Centers, directors inanely began recruiting ASTP students from forces already in training, further draining combat-bound units of junior leaders when they could afford the loss the least. Paradoxically, the Army Air Forces, who harbored the greatest proportion of eligibles, donated fewer than the rest:^{32*}

	<u>AAF</u>	<u>ASF</u>	<u>AGF</u>
1st Cycle	218 (4%)	2,151 (39%)	3,096 (57%)
2d Cycle	1,545 (14%)	4,744 (42%)	5,079 (44%)
3d Cycle	6,341 (23%)	8,183 (30%)	12,626 (47%)
STARS**	<u>5,107 (27%)</u>	<u>5,240 (28%)</u>	<u>8,544 (45%)</u>
TOTAL	13,211 (21%)	20,318 (32%)	29,378 (47%)

* * * * *

* First three training cycles, May-July 1943.

** Specialized Training and Assignment Units processing and holding ASTP Candidates.

Up to this point, we've examined functional distribution of enlisted men, based solely on AGCT. Under this scheme of classification, the most promising non-commissioned material was squandered in specialized training or whisked off to OCS.

For the residue that remained, fine screening then began.

In an effort to speed up mobilization and simplify training, Army planners applied Specification Serial Numbers (SSN) to every conceivable task. The scale ran from 001 to 999. Numbers below 500 identified military assignments which in some way conformed to civilian skills; 500 and above had no recognizable parallel -- tank gunners, bazookamen and the like.

Two exceptions proved the rule. SSN 521 tagged basic soldiers who had no practical civilian experience, but were bright enough to learn; SSN 590 was peopled with common laborers, those hewers of wood and drawers of water suitable only for simple chores.³³

Requirement and replacement rates for Military Occupational Specialties (MOS), computed by the Adjutant General in consonance with Tables of Organization and Distribution, were expressed in terms of X-number per 1000 men (Figure 9).³⁴

Obviously, this gave the Army Service Forces a powerful advantage, since men with the greatest intellect tend to be those with lucrative skills. The Corps of Engineers sopped up 90-odd different specialists, ranging from ferry boat captains and steeple jacks to cat-skinners, safe crackers, rivet-catchers and D-handle shovel jockeys; more than seven out of every ten. Poor SOB's in the Infantry did nothing much but fight.³⁵

To counteract this glaring deficiency in the MOS system, the Chief Psychologist, AG Personnel Procedures Bureau, very early warned against blindly assigning enlisted men on the basis of former trades. In his opinion, lost opportunity to command was the worst form of "occupational casualty." After all, not every master plumber should spend the war unplugging urinals if he could deploy a platoon with aplomb.³⁶

This entreaty fell on deaf ears. During the height of the personnel crisis, the War Department obstinately permitted proportionate distribution of top-notch men to Replacement Training Centers and units only "after* occupational specialists....(had) been supplied."³⁷ ASF, which operated all Reception Centers, cheerfully complied. In 1943, a sample study recorded the results. Only 17 percent of all EM having readily useable civilian trades had been assigned to alien pursuits in the Army.³⁸

Such short-sighted classification and assignment policies degraded the Army's ability to wage war. Squads, sections and platoons can squeak by without Lieutenants, but they're dead without NCO's. More damaging yet, critical deficiencies were concentrated where they were bound to hurt the most -- in the combat arms. If a Quartermaster Sergeant screws up, someone gets three carloads of size 14 left shoes; foul-ups on the firing line are paid for in human blood.

No question about it. The Non-Commissioned Officer Corps was in urgent need of help.

* Author's italics.

Instead, the situation got progressively worse.

Reorganization of the garden variety rifle squad, least common denominator of the whole dadblamed Army, makes an interesting case in point.

Before the first shot was fired in anger, a bull-headed Chief of Infantry beefed up each packet from eight men to a top-heavy twelve, although extensive field tests already had demonstrated pretty conclusively that the increased span of control would prove unwieldy in battle. Subsequent experience illuminated this mistake, but rather than revert to the original compact configuration, he elevated squad leaders to the exalted rank of Sergeant, and threw in a Corporal as Second-in-Command.³⁹

This one deceptively simple act doubled noncom requirements in 23,328 rifle squads belonging to the 288 infantry regiments on duty at the end of the war, and in squads organic to 70-plus separate battalions -- armored infantry, Rangers and the like. The final tally zoomed well past the 25,000 mark!⁴⁰⁻⁴¹

By 1945, the rifle squad leader had sewed on another stripe. So had nearly everyone else (Figure 10). In the larger, late model rifle company, the percentage of Privates and PFC's dropped a modest five points, but off the drawing board came an E-7 Top Kick, three E-6's and twenty-one E-5's that never graced the 1939 war strength TOE. Corporals disappeared completely from the traditional Chain of Command.⁴² Similar distortions cropped up in every arm and service.

Some of these changes were functional, but most were purely for pay. They created mass confusion that plagues us still today. The lives of young soldiers were lightened artificially, but the luster of leaders was dimmed.

The same group of do-gooders and ill-advised enthusiasts helped sculpt the insidious technician program unveiled by the War Department in January 1942. This gimmick, widely viewed with distrust even by its enlisted beneficiaries, was designed to clarify lines of promotion among technical personnel, to increase promotion opportunities among the lower grades, and to simplify pay procedures.⁴³

Existing specialist ratings were scrapped on 30 June 1942. In their stead, appeared Technicians, Grades Three, Four and Five.⁴⁴ The operation was a success, but the patient died.

For the first time, EM were awarded stripes as well as pay for technical or administrative skills not associated with leading troops. Confusion was instantly rife. Not only were the chevrons identical with those of legitimate NCO's, except for an unobtrusive "T", but "all regulations and orders relating to command authority (applied) to technicians in the same manner as to other non-commissioned officers."^{45*}

This bastard set-up played hell everywhere, but service and support forces undeniably suffered most. Sixty percent of an infantry division signal company ranked as NCO's:⁴⁶

* Author's italics.

	<u>1940</u>	<u>1945</u>
1st Sgt	1 (E-6)	1 (E-7)
M/Sgt	3	3
T/Sgt	2	9
S/Sgt	8	18
T-3	0	10
Sgt	13	16
T-4	0	43
Cpl	15	2
T-5	0	76
PFC	62	50
Pvt	<u>124</u>	<u>63</u>
Total	228	291

To fill these ludicrous quotas, accelerated advancement became the rage.

Stability provided by the permanent promotions, competitive examinations and protracted time-in-grade of sedate pre-war days was scrapped with the fleet at Pearl Harbor. For the duration plus six months, warrants were strictly temporary in the Army of the United States (AUS). Tables of Organization and Distribution afforded the only ceiling. There was no minimum time-in-grade.⁴⁷

Some degree of sanity prevailed where old hands remained in control, but by 1943, only one officer in 50 was a pro -- and the lion's share of these helplessly gravitated to paperwork in the bewildering maze of staffs.⁴⁸

In this game called "instant leaders," scandals unavoidably occurred. Baggy-trousered, slack-lipped Private Al Tork,* lately barkeep

* Name disguised.

in a crummy, fly-specked saloon, typified the rags-to-riches sagas that would have humbled Horatio Alger. This quick-change artist, with more angles than a plumber's helper, parlayed a high school typing course, a gullible C.O. and an uncommon gift for gab into First Sergeant's chevrons between February and June. The degree of respect he engendered rarely surpassed minus twelve.

In a way, Turk was dragging his feet. Some shot to the top on a single special order. A few such men may have been deserving, but enough lemons were involved to give the mix a sour taste.

First rate training might have helped, but once again the system broke down.

In the "Old Army," NCO development followed a classically simple pattern. Postulants joined their units and learned the trade from the ground up, as apprentices and journeymen, under the guidance of hawk-eyed and critical masters who knew all there was to know. Progress was methodical, steady and slow.

Attempts to apply this medieval arrangement to an Army expanding at the speed of light were sadly predestined to fail. The essential ingredients of success were gone.

Regular noncoms who showed the most moxie had been summoned early to OCS. The vacuum initially was filled by 1940-41 Selectees, lanceless Lancelots devoid of professional know-how and fresh from civilian life. As a group, they were less than strong. Most had been drafted because there was no excuse for their being deferred; they weren't in school, they had no dependents and many had no jobs. Prior to

7 December 1941, they reflected national uncertainty, had no discernable objectives and looked on military service as a slightly lachrymose lark. The leaven of discipline was paper thin.⁴⁹

These were the noncons ready to receive fillers when the fireworks hit the fan.

Then they, too, began to go.

To OCS.

To specialist schools.

To serve as overhead in 29 Reception Centers and 21 basic training camps, nation-wide.⁵⁰

To cadre 55 new divisions activated after the United States entered the war, plus a mountain of service support spare parts.⁵¹

NCO's that stayed with their outfits were a much picked over lot. One exasperated commander, in the depths of bleak despair, bemoaned the total absence of reliable non-commissioned officers to act as instructors, because "everyone higher than a moron" had been drained off for one reason or another.⁵² One division lost 800 noncons in the spring of 1942, and a passel of junior officers. The residue was "below the desired standard," but through necessity, "several of the companies and most of the platoons" were commanded by enlisted misfits.⁵³

National Guard divisions were no better off. Federalized at less than 60 percent strength, and disgracefully lacking equipment, they deliberately were spared this demoralizing process so they could

get off of their backs and on to their feet, ready to answer the ball. This was easier said than done. Numerous officers were over-age, incompetent political appointees; enlisted ranks were shot full of noncoms deficient in tactical training, general education, or both, who balked at puttin' the bee on beer-drinking buddies they knew in the old home town. They were nice guys, but there wasn't any demand for 'em. This situation gradually straightened out, but it took irreplaceable time.⁵⁴

Service schools were ready and willing to bridge the gap, but among the combat arms, at least, they never were called into play. For a variety of complex reasons, General McNair firmly believed that enlisted leaders could be molded only by exercising responsibility and command in active units under realistic, challenging conditions. Embryonic new noncoms, therefore, indiscriminately were pushed off the deep end, and were left to sink or swim. None were ever school-trained.⁵⁵

The Infantry School in 1943 made an abortive proposal to train OCS rejects as platoon sergeants. Army Ground Forces turned them down cold with the turgid statement, "No change in the present policy under which enlisted men are confined to specialist schools is contemplated.... Education and development of leadership in enlisted men remains the responsibility of officers with troop units." A year later, War Department interest in non-commissioned schooling modelled on OCS met with the same rebuke.⁵⁶

In the end, haphazard selection, premature promotion and incompetent training of NCO's took a terrible toll.

Stateside inspection reports were filled with judgments reproaching "hesitant, uncertain leadership by platoon and squad leaders" in training.⁵⁷

Such problems were soon overseas.

On the eve of invading North Africa, a rising young General named Eisenhower deplored the ineffectiveness of junior leaders among U.S. troops quarantined in the United Kingdom.⁵⁸

In New Georgia, where lieutenants and NCO's broke down, panic spread among the ranks, and needless sacrifice of human life ensued.⁵⁹

Observers with Fifth Army in Italy declaimed that "squad leaders and patrol leaders with initiative were scarce."⁶⁰

Came the cold, cruel dawn in February 1944, when Chief of Staff George C. Marshall was forced to notify Secretary Stimson that "the outstanding deficiency currently noted in our divisions is the number of non-commissioned officers who are below satisfactory standards of intelligence and qualities of leadership."⁶¹

It was a sorry state of affairs.

With battles at Anzio and bloody Buna Mission in progress, and the agony in Normandy's hedgerows soon to come, no half-hearted measures would do.

ASTP was the first to go. On 10 February, General Marshall penned a transparently disguised ultimatum to the Secretary of War: prune the over-grown Army Specialized Training Program drastically, or face instantaneous dissolution of 10 divisions, 3 tank battalions and 26 anti-aircraft battalions.⁶² In retrospect, this must have

been an easy decision to make. Effective April Fool's Day 1944, 150,000 partly-trained troops on college campuses were cut back 80 percent. The principal survivors of this carnage were doctors and dentists for the hard-pressed Medical Corps.⁶³

More or less concurrently, 30,000 surplus aviation cadets forsook the wild blue yonder for foxholes and C-Ration stew. They were followed by an additional grant of 40,000 high quality Air Corps men before the close of the year. Further recruiting of air cadets within the ASG and ASF was summarily stopped.⁶⁴⁻⁶⁵

Finally, the War Department expressed astonished concern over the asinine number of technicians impersonating real NCO's, and belatedly began to emphasize the value of "non-commissioned officers who exercise command responsibility," as opposed to those who sported gratuitous stripes.⁶⁶ In response, 25,000 freshly-scrubbed specialists shifted from Service Forces to the ground gaining arms late in 1944.⁶⁷

All told, nearly a quarter of a million quick-witted young men gave the sagging NCO Corps a much-needed shot in the arm. They lacked training and practical experience, but they learned fast, and before the Axis threw in the sponge, many of them became outstanding small unit leaders.⁶⁸

God knows, they were sorely needed. In addition to purely administrative problems, the Non-Commissioned Officer Corps was hard hit by wartime attrition -- battlefield promotions, killed, wounded and missing in action. By December 1944, combat losses in the European Theater alone were running 90,000 a month, including numerous fine NCO's.⁶⁹

Casualties, naturally, were lumped in rifle platoons exposed to enemy fire. The appalling hazards can best be illustrated by the mouse-holing, house-to-house, no-quarter contest for St. Lô, which inflicted 3934 battle casualties on the 30th Infantry Division in 15 grueling days. The Division as a whole lost roughly one fourth of all its men, but the rifle platoons emerged at barely 10 percent strength.⁷⁰

The program to stop up these holes with volunteers from other branches fell solidly on its pratt. Air Corps and tech service non-coms and specialists filtering into divisions included far too many toss-pots and trouble-makers on the move to save their stripes.

One disenchanted G-1, saddled with 300 of these dandys, morosely observed that in every case they were malcontents "who did not like their commanding officers, who wanted a change of station or who were falling down on their jobs. In some instances, pressure has been put on them to volunteer....An officer will say to a misfit or ne'er-do-well: 'You're apt to lose your rating if you stay here. You've got a good chance to keep your stripes by joining the doughboys. My advice is for you to take it.'"⁷¹

Promiscuous dumping had an unforeseen effect. In July 1944, seven divisions reported NCO surpluses averaging 454 each. The 76th Infantry Division was the horrible example, with 1228, nearly 700 of whom were technicians.⁷²

These misbegotten overages effectively barred advancement for faithful wheel-horses who had worked long and hard, but more important,

they were humiliating. Artless NCO's and non-commissioned specialists from far-flung foreign fields necessarily were squashed into the mire as basic riflemen, under squad leaders many months junior to them. On the theory that you can't tell the players without a scorecard, G-3, 63d Infantry Division devised "orange bands for the T/O NCO's to wear on the arms of their fatigue clothes."⁷³ Issue chevrons were the Badge of Shame.

After minimum orientation, non-commissioned newcomers usually were allowed to try their hand in positions corresponding to their ratings. Some ferocious competitors made the grade, but most of 'em forfeited stripes.⁷⁴

This was a fairly minor operation, without benefit of anesthesia. Regulations recognized that "occasions will arise when non-commissioned officers must be reduced in grade (to fit) assignments commensurate with their ability or to meet the requirements of organizational changes," and empowered appointing authorities to "reduce, without prejudice, (any NCO) who is excess in grade and...immediately reappoint him" in a lower grade.⁷⁵

* * * * *

How many fathers, brothers, husbands and sons rest eternally under the shade of Arlington's trees because of inept enlisted leadership during World War II of course will never be known. By inference, the number is great.

But slowly, by main strength and awkwardness, and against ridiculous odds, a new breed of noncoms at last began to take shape.

What emerged after 44 months in the crucible and 34 battle streamers on the Army flag was seasoned, tough and professional, accomplished through and through.

Global strategists set the stage for victory, gesturing grandiosely at layer-tinted maps, but neither Generals nor Colonels nor Captains in company CP's gave the final, bone-chilling orders to storm yon bristling hill. That privilege was reserved for stubble-faced noncoms crouched in the mud, tracing a 1,000-meter scheme of maneuver with a stick -- and when squads fanned out as skirmishers, everyone was behind 'em; not many brass hats showed the way.

A few NCO's garnered glory and far-flung fame, like Audie Murphy, a living legend in his time, Commando Kelly and one-time Sergeant Roger Young. All told, noncoms raked in 111 Medals of Honor; 76 more were won by Privates and PFC's, whose courage and proficiency sometimes paid off in stripes.⁷⁶ * Master Sergeant Curtis G. Culin left a leg in Europe, but his ingenious hedgerow cutter for First Army tanks assisted the Normandy Breakthrough and gained him a DSM.⁷⁷ Countless other hollow-eyed heroes went unnoticed and unsung. Without trumpets, flourishes or fanfare, they got the bloody job done.

We destroyed this costly creation in 10 unbelievable months.

While Uncle Joe Stalin cheered, and mamas screamed hysterically for their boys, the nation ripped its little red wagon apart, and rushed a rabble home.⁷⁸ Near dementia prevailed. By June 1946,

* Army ground actions only.



2. Master Sergeant Curtis G. Culin, modern Leonardo. Inset depicts the "Rhino" Hedgerow cutter he designed, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal.

over 6,000,000 citizen soldiers had shucked their O.D. uniforms,
never more to roam.⁷⁹

Wearily, the Army picked up the pieces, and started all over
again.

FIGURE 6

ENLISTED PERSONNEL ACCESSIONS DURING WORLD WAR II*

	<u>DRAFT</u>	<u>ENLISTMENTS</u>	<u>OTHER**</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1941 (Dec)	26,603	57,521	17	84,141
1942	<u>3,122,247</u>	<u>655,272</u>	<u>37,940</u>	<u>3,815,459</u>
Jul	278,712	36,381		317,252
Aug	323,458	36,906		362,288
Sep	331,133	66,515		399,385
Oct	394,002	114,382		514,345
Nov	374,849	75,138		458,248
Dec	344,738	37,275		392,926
1943	<u>2,376,309</u>	<u>4,603</u>	<u>278,512</u>	<u>2,659,424</u>
Jan	354,535	281		385,161
Feb	336,882	513		374,546
Mar	333,021	164		379,113
1944	987,598	3,384	112,370	1,113,352
1945 (Jan-Aug)	<u>661,744</u>	<u>4,984</u>	<u>58,646</u>	<u>725,374</u>
Grand Total	7,174,501	725,764	497,503	8,397,750

Total July 1942-March 1943 = 3,580,000

* Draft and enlistment figures include detailed breakdown for period that totals 300,000 or more each month.

** Includes Enlisted Reserve Corps callups.

FIGURE 7
ENLISTED GRADE STRUCTURE

31 May 1945

2,175,931

Total Strength: 7,305,834

(Female Personnel Not Included)

Army Air Forces: 1,926,356

Gray Bars Indicate 1939 Level

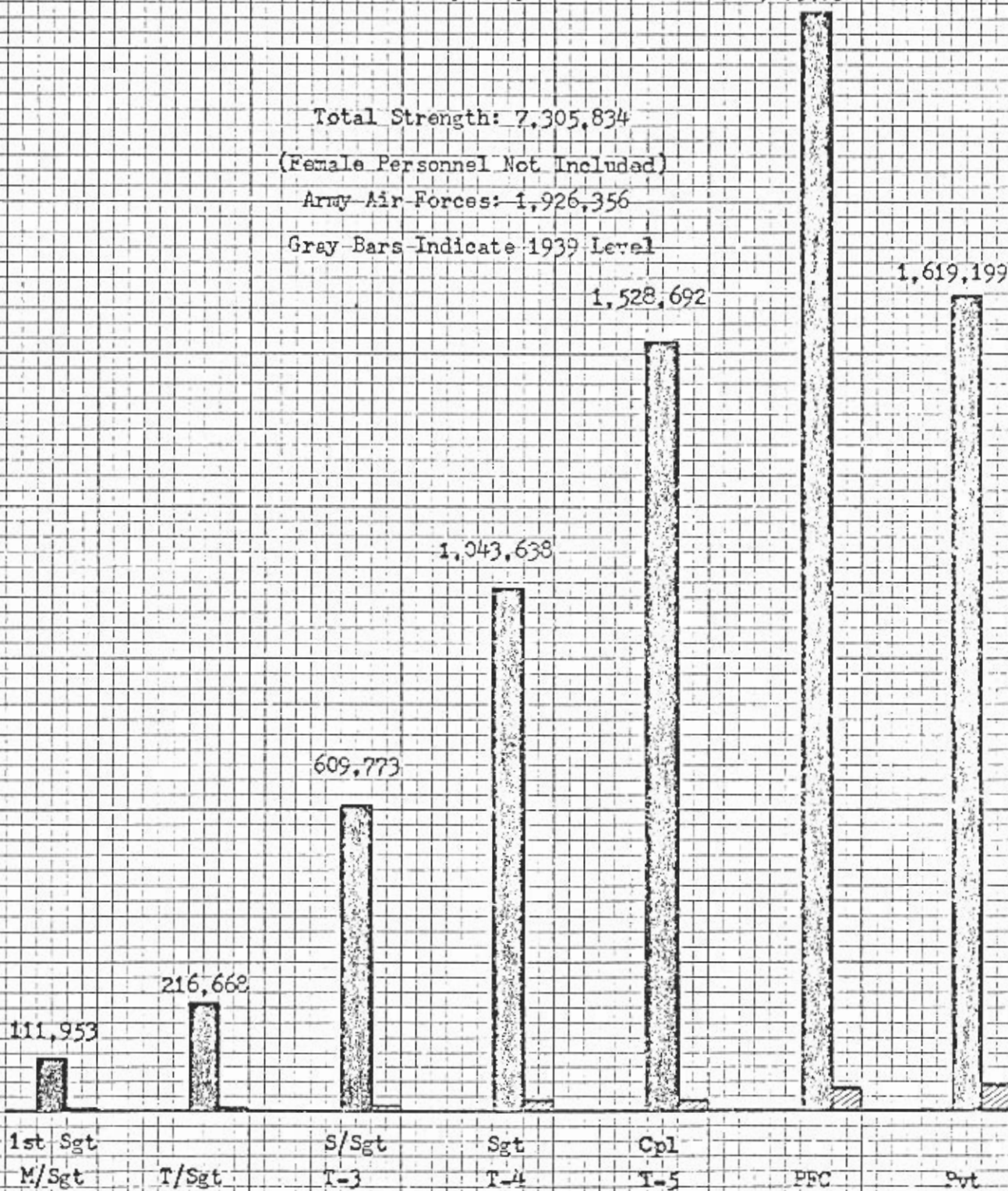


FIGURE 8
OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL GRADUATES
WORLD WAR II

	<u>1941</u>	<u>1942</u>	<u>1943</u>	<u>1944</u>	<u>1945</u>
JAN		928	18,564	2,276	3,516
FEB		488	15,825	1,258	2,277
MAR		636	18,525	1,327	2,538
APR		2,163	18,702	1,889	2,659
MAY		5,025	11,071	1,602	4,083
JUN		6,921	10,043	1,561	3,957
JUL		10,662	10,413	1,145	2,475
AUG		12,647	8,416	1,783	1,764
SEP	905	15,480	5,763	2,243	
OCT	414	19,338	2,734	2,438	
NOV	220	15,576	3,121	5,071	
DEC	<u>680</u>	<u>23,428</u>	<u>3,262</u>	<u>5,066</u>	
TOTAL	2,219	113,292	126,439*	27,659	23,269

GRAND TOTAL: 292,878

* 1943 OCS graduates equal 75 percent of total enlisted strength in 1939.

FIGURE 9
 REQUIREMENT AND REPLACEMENT RATES, MILITARY SPECIALISTS
 JANUARY 1943
 (PER 1000 MEN)

<u>BRANCH</u>	<u>SSN < 500</u>	<u>LABORERS</u>	<u>BASIC</u>	<u>OTHER SSN > 500</u>
AAA	224	0	106	670
Armor	253	3	89	655
CA	197	0	99	704
Cav	322	1	91	586
FA	347	0	111	542
Inf	164	0	104	732
TD	338	0	109	553
<hr/>				
Chem	409	182	116	293
Engr	725	1	120	154
Med	438	0	163	399
MP	108	0	112	780
Ord	641	45	171	143
QMC	466	268	121	145
Sig	579	0	107	314
Trans	788	90	59	63

FIGURE 10
ORGANIZATION, INFANTRY RIFLE COMPANY
1945

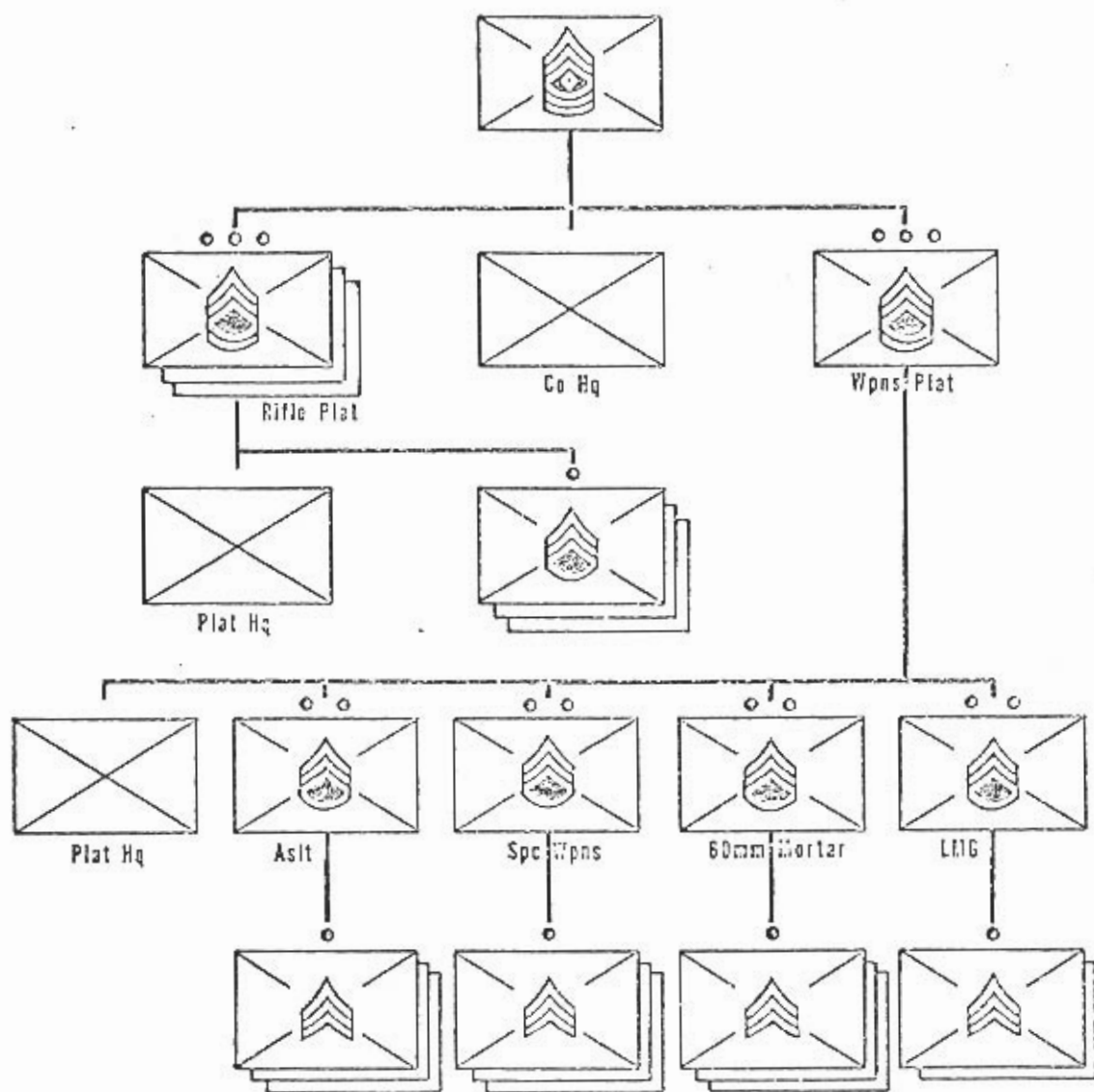


FIGURE 10 (CONTINUED)

ENLISTED STRENGTH

1st Sgt	1
T/Sgt	4
S/Sgt	18
T-3	0
Sgt	21
T-4	4
Cpl	13
T-5	3
PFC	123
Pvt	<u>48</u>
Total	235

Notes:

1. Assault Section armed with 2.36-inch rocket launchers.
2. Special Weapons Section armed with 57mm recoilless rifle.
3. Light Machinegun Section armed with 30 caliber LMG.