

OCS Newsletter

August 2023 | Issue 01



OCS Class 64
"Calm in the Chaos"



Inside THE ISSUE

- Interview with the 860th Military Police Company Commander, CPT Andrew Deinert
- Reflection on lessons learned from the July IDT student leadership team
- OC Spotlight with Manuel Gutierrez
- Reviews of the classic WWII memoir, *To Hell and Back* and 2016 biographical film, *Hackshaw Ridge*
- Recap of OCS Class 64's Phase 1 experience at Fort Meade, SD

01

Lessons Learned

"Always be ready for the unexpected. I had no expectations to become Platoon Leader heading into July's drill." - OC Edward McFadden

03

Company Commander Interview

"Bad things will happen even if you do everything right. You must be able to think through the stress because lives are depending on you." - CPT Andrew Deinert

05

OCS Phase 1 Recap

Arizona Officer Candidates spend two weeks at Ft. Meade, SD for Phase 1. They train on leadership, land navigation, and try desperately to avoid marching headfirst into trees.

CLASS LEADERSHIP REFLECTION

Every month, our newsletter opens with a reflection from our prior drill's student leadership. According to *Field Manual 6-22: Leader Development*, reflective thinking skills are essential practices to deeply processing information and they help to facilitate Army leader development (3-48). These reflections also act as knowledge transfers for other officer candidates to better prepare for their time as class leaders.

In this month's installment, we hear from OC McFadden (PL) and OC Harper (PSG) on their experiences during July IDT.

Class Platoon Leader

Written by OC Edward McFadden



Any officer candidate will be familiar with the long sigh of relief that follows the end of a tour in a student leadership position. The responsibility, the constant observation by cadre, and the ever-present question of accountability can be nerve wracking.

But it's hard to deny that the experience teaches some valuable lessons after the uniform is hung up to dry at the end of the day.

Always be ready for the unexpected. I had no expectations to become Platoon Leader heading into July's drill. I only knew that someone would take the place of the outgoing PL. When I learned the news on Friday night, with about 18 hours to prepare, I felt a spasm of panic. It came as a timely reminder that anyone in the formation could be called on to fill any position at any time. This is a training environment, but the real-world applications are important. Soldiers need to be ready to assume command at a moment's notice, especially in combat. For me, I had to take a deep breath and remind myself that I knew my stuff. Now it was time to get to work.

Succeed (or fail) as a team. Each officer candidate is chasing the much coveted "Go" on their Leadership Evaluation Report. The critical, deciding moment is the three-day period as student leadership. But that doesn't mean that officer candidates in the ranks of the formation get the day off. It's up to the individuals to pull hard, drill down, and produce an inspection-ready platoon for the Platoon Leader and Platoon Sergeant. Acting as PL for July's drill taught me that, when I'm not in a leadership position, my battle buddies are still counting on me to do the right thing. All of us are. Student leadership, like OCS as a whole, needs a lot of teamwork to be done correctly.

Be resilient. Things are never as bad as they seem. The cadre are good at their job creating a stressful learning environment. It's important to be able to shake off the criticism and self-doubt that follows failure and to keep self-talk positive and productive. Some of my favorites are "What's next?" and "Let's do this!" The ability to swap out the tooth-grinding with a motivating substitute will help bounce back from the inevitable failures that come with OCS. It's important to remember, even when things go wrong, we are still in this fight.

Class Platoon Sergeant

Written by OC DeShay Harper



While Officer Candidate School is designed to develop 2nd lieutenants, being placed in the role of platoon sergeant (PSG) gave me the opportunity to improve my leadership abilities, which is at the core of being an officer. Effective leadership, being

able to inspire others to come alongside you for the mission, requires leading by example. Leading by example includes the display of mental agility - being

able to reason critically and make a decision. Military expertise, having the knowledge required to complete the mission. Physical fitness, having your body in shape to carry you through the mission. And Esprit de Corps, showing pride in the shared mission.

I was also able to gain tangible experience in the relationship between a platoon leader (PL) and a PSG. The role of the PL in summary is to provide purpose and direction while the PSG is tasked with implementation and sustainment.

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."
John Quincy Adams

OFFICER CANDIDATE SPOTLIGHT

Written by OC Manuel Gutierrez



In this month's OC Spotlight, we sit down with Officer Candidate Manuel Gutierrez. He is a 92Y, Unit Supply Specialist, who joined the Army National Guard in 2021. His home unit is the 198th Regional Support Group stationed at PPMR in Phoenix.

Gutierrez was born and raised in Queretaro, Mexico. He comes from a military family that has four soldiers, one merchant marine, and one airman. He is an international traveler who has lived in Rome and Milan and wants to continue to travel the world while applying the skills he learns in the Army to help others. He is also a polyglot who speaks Spanish, English, French, Italian, and Portuguese.

Q: Why did you join the Army National Guard?

A: I joined the Army National Guard because I felt I needed to do something more for my community and this blessed country that I call home now. At the peak of COVID and when the vaccine became available, I was hearing a lot about the National Guard in the news. Personally, the dedication of Soldiers to protect civilians and to help organize the distribution of the vaccine really captivated my mind. I previously was a volunteer in the Mexican Red Cross as an EMT and a disaster relief technician, and I enjoyed my time serving the population back in the day. And then, I said to myself, I can do this again. I didn't know what I was going to put myself through during BCT at 35 years of age, but I surely thought that the result was worth any pain during the process.

Q: How would people describe you?

A: As a very dependable person with a passion for the things I do. Other soldiers often say I always bring a positive attitude and do my best to support my battle buddies. In my civilian career, I always exceed expectations and deliver products and services to my clients that are of the highest quality, on time, and accurate.

Q: What is your educational background?

A: I have a BS in industrial engineering from the University of San Juan (in Mexico), an MS in global technology and development from Arizona State University, and an MBA from Benedictine University. I am currently studying for my Ph.D. in Health Administration and Operational Leadership. It is challenging to juggle this alongside OCS and my full-time civilian job, but: Challenge Accepted!

Q: What do you want to branch as after OCS?

A: I originally wanted to branch into the Medical Corps to connect both my civilian and military worlds. I explored direct commissioning but ultimately, I am happy I followed the OCS path. Now I am interested in Logistics or Finance. The skills we are learning in this program will prepare us to be efficient leaders with sharp decision-making capabilities and a calmness of mind during chaotic times.

Q: What does leadership mean to you?

A: Leadership to me is helping everyone to have an easier, no-nonsense job, every time. When directions and procedures don't have a sensible/logical execution they become a tedious chore to perform, thus people will dedicate less excellence to their work. Subordinates then will say, "Why am I doing this?" I want to improve the experience of every member of the organization.

Q: What are your long-term career goals?

A: I want to commission as an Army officer and start my career in Logistics or Finance. In addition, I plan to take the Defense Language Proficiency Test in Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese. I also want to graduate with my Ph.D. and continue my civilian work in the healthcare field. Finally, I want to secure the growth of my translation/interpretation firm, lease a fixed office space, and expand my client portfolio.

COMMANDER INTERVIEW

Written by OC Matthew Todd

This month, we connect with company commander of the 860th Military Police Company, CPT Andrew Deinert, to discuss CPT Deinert's journey as an Army officer, views on leadership, and advice he has for aspiring Army officers.

Q: Why did you choose Military Police (MP) as your branch?

A: *MPs are the Army's multi-tool and can handle just about every mission set the Army could request. I took their motto to heart, which is: "to assist, protect, and defend."*

Q: What are the most important skills for an Army leader to have?

A: *Flexibility and the ability to see the forest beyond the trees. Plans fall apart and you must be able to adjust fire. It is important to not lose site of the mission if you must adjust fire: do it. Plans should have several courses of action and contingencies. It is also important not to get stuck in your mindset. Do not be afraid to take a step back and understand the why from a larger scale.*

Q: What is the best part of being a commander?

A: *Seeing the faces on subordinates when they are empowered, and training starts to click. That excitement to train improves morale and gives your Soldiers ownership.*

Q: What is the most challenging part of being a commander?

A: *The worry. You start to deeply care for your Soldiers and you want the best for them especially if your unit is on a partial deployment.*

Q: How do you handle conflict on the team?

A: *It is imperative to address the matter proportionally and early. Sometimes you need to be the calming uniting force between the teams and sometimes you need to be the hammer. You must establish fast what level to address a conflict. Empowering your lower levels to handle conflict at their level while reserving larger issues for yourself, empowers junior leaders and frees you to handle larger force-wide problems.*

Q: How do you keep your unit/soldiers motivated?

A: *By giving them realistic goals and acknowledging and praising the work they are able to complete. Some soldiers do not realize how much they accomplish in a drill.*

Q: What advice would you provide to Officer Candidates?

A: *Embrace the suck and it is an unjust world. Bad things will happen even if you do everything right. You must be able to think through the stress because lives are depending on you.*

Q: As a commander, what are the most important qualities/attributes you look for in new LTs joining your command?

A: *The drive to learn and the willingness to ask for help from their PSG. This shows humility.*

Q: What are the most important challenges the Army faces today? And how can new LTs be a part of the solution?

A: *Lack of funds and lack of motivation in the force. Be creative and find ways to empower your soldiers. Giving them ownership increases the likelihood of investing into the organization because they care about it.*

Q: How has your leadership style changed - if at all - as you've advanced in your Army career?

A: *Learning when to keep your mouth shut and observe can greatly help any career.*

Q: What advice would you give to new LTs when they reach their first unit?

A: *Take the first 90 days before making any serious changes to the organization. Get to learn the culture of the group and then make slight adjustments.*

Q: What is your favorite quote?

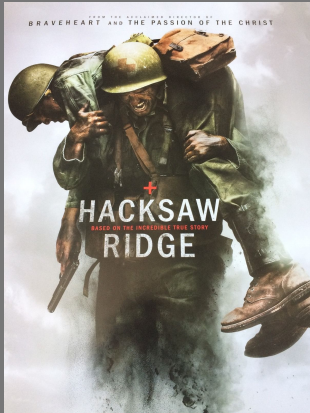
A: *"A return to first principles in a republic is sometimes caused by the simple virtues of one man. His good example has such an influence that the good men strive to imitate him and the wicked are ashamed to lead a life so contrary to his example." – Niccolo Machiavelli*

Q: Finally, what books would you recommend to aspiring leaders?

A: *Starship Troopers, The Prince, SPQR, This Kind of War, About Face*

MOVIE REVIEW

Written by OC Austin Weigel



Release Date: November 4, 2016 (USA)

Director: Mel Gibson



Hackshaw Ridge is the cinematic retelling of Medal of Honor recipient CPL Desmond Thomas Doss's heroic feats during the Battle of Okinawa. If there is anything that this movie is to be blamed for, it is that director, Mel Gibson, was unable to recount everything that CPL Doss was able to achieve in just the 2-hour and 19-minute run time.

Enlisting in April 1942, young Desmond joined the service despite being granted a deferment for working in a shipyard at Camp Lee, Virginia. He was assigned to the newly reactivated 77th Infantry Division. Doss was a Seventh-day Adventist and was raised to have a non-violent and vegetarian lifestyle. Desmond joined the military as a Conscientious Objector, pouring his efforts into learning how to become a medic.

Hackshaw Ridge depicts Doss's valor, heroism and his struggles as everyone around him thinks he is crazy for not wanting to arm himself while going into combat. The film focuses on Doss' trust in God's call and heroism as a medic who saved 75 men on top of the Maeda Escarpment ("Hackshaw Ridge"). His two Bronze Stars and later Medal of Honor clearly defines what it means as a United States Army soldier to live according to a life of selfless service. Hackshaw Ridge is a must see for any young, or seasoned, military member.

BOOK REVIEW

Written by OC William Mauro



Publish Date: Jan 1, 1949



To Hell and Back is the classic memoir of Audie Murphy, the most decorated Army soldier of WWII. Murphy grew up a poor Texan farm boy who was eager to join the war effort after Pearl Harbor; however, he was considered too small for the Navy, Marines, and Paratroopers. He eventually found a home with the Army infantry. The book covers his engagements through the Mediterranean and European theaters with the 3rd Infantry Division where he earned every US Army combat award available.

Written in first-person narrative, there is a humility throughout the retelling of his violent, awe-inspiring story. He focuses on his men, not his medals. And his band of brothers are a diverse group of hard-charging grunts who barely know each other's first name but know crystal clear the hometowns and sweethearts each left behind. Each man's personality is quickly revealed through the back-and-forth dialogue between each other, and the reader would be remiss not to pause after each of their deaths.

Though it's a memoir about Murphy, his story does more to highlight the heroism and dedication of his men, as he writes:

"But I also believe in my men like Brandon and Novak and Swope and Kerrigan; and all the men who stood up against the enemy, taking their beatings without whimper and their triumphs without boasting. The men who went and would go again to hell and back to preserve what our country thinks right and decent."

I highly recommend this book for its exemplary showcase of an American soldier's loyalty, duty, and selfless service.

After the war, Murphy would become a Hollywood actor and made over 40 feature films, including *To Hell and Back* (1955) where he portrays himself. Tragically, Murphy is killed in a plane crash in 1971.

OCS PHASE 1 RECAP

Written by OC William Mauro

On July 15th, 2023, 15 Arizona Officer Candidates (OCs) set out for historic Fort Meade, SD for Phase 1 of their OCS journey. Nestled in the Black Hills, Fort Meade was once home to the 7th U.S. Cavalry (Battle of Little Bighorn), 25th U.S. Infantry (Buffalo Soldiers), and where the "Star Spangled Banner" was first used for the military retreat ceremony before it was our National Anthem. Now, nearly 150 years after its establishment, the fort serves as an historic point in each of these OCs' lives.

Once they arrive, the group is quickly dispersed across three platoons. They are ceremoniously welcomed by an encouraging group of Black Hats who offer words of motivation for all to hear. Afterwards, OCs spend the next two weeks running between the barracks, classrooms, the dining facility, and a "tree of knowledge" at what seems like a *quadruple-time* pace. When they're afforded the chance to march, they belt cadences and do their best to avoid the trees. Oh, the trees.

A series of assessments are strewn across the two weeks: Army leadership principles, 6-mile ruck, land navigation, and Army Training Management System.

Class leadership rotates every two days. Some are picked for squad leaders, while the luckiest of the bunch find themselves platoon sergeants, or better yet: company first sergeant. OCS can be a confusing place, but the Black Hats are always present to remind these Ding-Dongs... excuse me, Officer Candidates, where they are and what is expected of them. In time, OCs' leadership, communication, planning, and accountability skills improve. And in parallel they befriend and network with candidates from other states.

In the end, Phase 1 is a memorable experience for all involved. It serves as a pivotal point in the OCS journey. OCs, instructors, and platoon trainers each play a unique part in the development of these aspiring Army leaders. Now it's time for these OCs to take what they've learned and look ahead to the next set of challenges: Phase 2 and 3.

1st Platoon



Arthur, Hildebrandt, Rivera, Todd, Wilcox

2nd Platoon



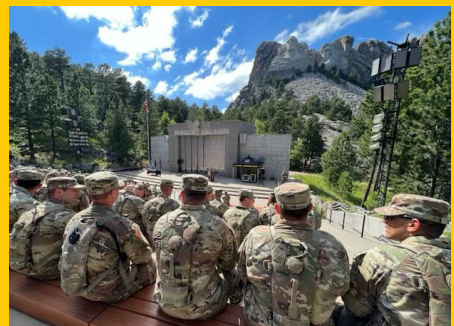
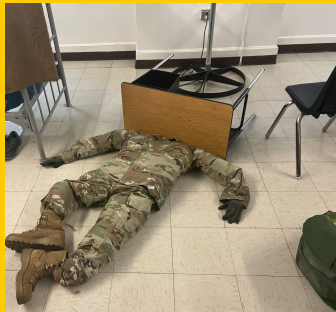
Doane, Gutierrez, Mauro, Riley

3rd Platoon



Dozal, Foster, Harper, McFadden, Santos, Weigel

OCS PHASE 1



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Photo credit(s): To Hell and Back (Biblio.com); Hackshaw Ridge (ImperfectDisciples.com).