**Path to Leadership**

OCS was a rigorous, physically and mentally demanding program of about 6-months duration. My timing was “perfect,” catching both the heat and humidity of Virginia in August-September and the winter snow and cold in December. While there was some continuation of the combat related skills learned in BCT, OCS kicked things up… a lot.

There were three general areas of training and evaluation: intellectual, physical and emotional. The intellectual comprised everything from sweeping minefields to constructing bridges and every other engineering project needed on the battlefield. It was about 50-50 classroom and field work. The physical began the first day of arrival and continued every day almost until graduation. We ran - never walked - everywhere. If we were caught walking, we were dropped for punitive push-ups or other physical drills. I went into OCS weighing a pretty in-shape 185 pounds; I came out weighing 165. The emotional was perhaps the most important skill and measurement. We were taunted, tormented and pushed to limits daily in one way or another. If we weren’t in class, we were in the field; if we weren’t in the field, we were doing PT drills; if we weren’t doing PT, we were cleaning barracks and spit-shining shoes to a mirror finish. The barracks were not clean unless Tactical Officer (TAC Officer) Lt. Rosencrantz could unscrew a light switch cover plate and swipe a white glove coming out clean. The emotional challenge was considerable, with one classmate - a Sergeant E-6 with two combat tours - dropping out after 6 weeks.

**Red Tabs**

There were three roughly equal phases of OCS, equivalent to sophomore, junior and senior grades in school They were marked by small plastic tabs inserted under the brass “OCS” insignias worn on our collars. Initially, we wore the brass insignia only. After completing the first phase successfully, we received our “white tabs.” This was both a visible sign of achievement, and a small let-up in the demands placed upon us daily; we were treated with a modest degree of respect and accorded small benefits (initially, hot water for showers was considered a benefit).

Being awarded red tabs was a big deal, and was accorded the respect of the more junior candidates. At that point, you had earned both the standing and privileges of being upperclassmen, including off post leaves. Most importantly, receiving red tabs was a sign that you had all but graduated.

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