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**FILE TITLE:** A Brief History of Early NCO Academies

**AUTHOR:** SMSgt Pam Lane, 4 Dec 1996

**Reviewed by:**

**AFEHRI Representative** G.R. Akin date 5 Dec 97

**EPC Representative** Yan Chen date 18 Dec 97

**Scanner Operator** Sunny Roden date 13 Dec 97

**APPROVED BY:** Gary R. Akin

GARY R. AKIN, CMSgt, USAF

Director

Air Force Enlisted Heritage Research Institute

**A BRIEF HISTORY  
OF  
EARLY NCO ACADEMIES**

**BY:  
SMSGT PAM LANE, SNCOA CLASS 97-C**

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF EARLY NCO ACADEMIES

We in the military come from every walk of life—rich and poor, black, white, and every color in between, country boy and city girl. Our common ground is the men and women who came before us, brave pioneers blazing trails that we might follow. The military is steeped in tradition and history; as a senior NCO I feel duty-bound to learn about the past, and carry that knowledge with me into the future. Reading this paper will give you knowledge of early NCO academies to carry with you into the future. I focused on these main areas: why NCO schools were developed, a brief history of several early NCO schools, to include prerequisites for admission and subjects taught, and the objectives of the schools. It is an interesting journey that begins in North Africa during the last years of World War II.

In 1944, a group of officers saw the need to improve the efficiency of their NCO's. The officers wanted to increase the NCO's concept of leadership, while simultaneously increasing the NCO's technical skills. In December 1944, Headquarters, North African Division, directed base commanders to create NCO schools. The objective of the school was expressed by General Stowell who said: "It is my wish that the men of this Division be the best informed army in the world. We will reach this goal when we know not only our own jobs on the line and in the shops, when we know not only aircraft engines and office procedures, but when we know and realize just as well our responsibilities as officers and NCO's and enlisted men...and are prepared to use it, on the line, in the offices and shops, on the playing field and in the barracks" (7:95-96). They established a detailed curriculum that included subjects like: The NCO and His Responsibilities, Your Responsibility in Regard to Military Courtesy, Discipline and Customs of the Service, Base

Regulations, Voice and Command, and The Legal Officer. The course lasted five days, and had 41 hours of instruction. Most of the men who attended the course felt it was good; they enjoyed the review of essential information and the welcome break from their daily duties. The commanding officer at the 1252<sup>nd</sup> AAF Base liked the course so much he required all newly *commissioned officers* to attend the class (7:97).

The next step established a Division NCO school at Fedala, Tunisia. This school was to provide special training to outstanding NCO's from all bases within the division. The school would increase the NCO's interest in their work, improve their leadership skills, and help them to understand the problems arising with the close of World War II in Europe. The school was conducted in the beautiful Miramar Hotel, and provided excellent food and living conditions. This school lasted two weeks, and had an increased emphasis on physical conditioning. Students spent over 19 hours doing physical activities. Other areas of study included: military instruction to include parades, retreat, and use of the carbine and 45 caliber pistol, and 44 hours of instruction emphasizing speaking, and information and educational subjects (7:97). From those humble beginnings came another NCO school, this one at West Drayton, United Kingdom.

Colonel Robert Templeman organized the school at West Drayton in November 1952, for the men of the 3911<sup>th</sup> Air Base Group. According to a unit press release it was the only leadership-type school in the Air Force at that time (5:Appendix 7). The purpose of the school was simple, and well explained by Colonel Robert Templeman, one of the founders of the school. He stated: "...Now more than ever before...more responsibility has been taken from the officer personnel and placed firmly on the shoulders of the NCO. Training as presented here will help qualify the

NCO to accept this responsibility and will enable him to take his place among capable and efficient NCO's" (1:144). The objective of the school was to reinstate the senior NCO as a leader, not to teach the junior NCO how to become one. To be eligible to attend the class the men had to meet the following criteria: be a master sergeant with a seven skill level in his AFSC, have at least 6 months retainability in the United Kingdom, and a minimum character and efficiency rating of excellent (1:144). Initially, the school lasted 2 weeks, and there were 15 students per class. According to Unit History from the 7<sup>th</sup> Air Division a representative went to the 7<sup>th</sup> Army NCO School at Munich, Germany to observe techniques of instruction, obtain training aids, and evaluate the curriculum of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army School for subject matter that might be used in the 7<sup>th</sup> Air Division school (1:145). Representatives also went to the 32<sup>nd</sup> AAA Brigade NCO School at Brigstock Camp, United Kingdom to get supplies and equipment. After applying the new techniques learned at the Army school, the school was extended to 3 weeks, and the student load increased to 30 students per class. The new curriculum included: Essentials of Leadership, Drill and Command, Ground Safety, Military Law, Personnel Management, and Public Speaking and Expression. The first students to experience this new curriculum graduated on 24 January 1953. The school was so successful Major General John P. McConnell directed it be expanded to cover the entire 7<sup>th</sup> Air Division (5:Appendix7). The next class contained students from bases other than West Drayton, and this class had the privilege of an address from General Curtis E. LeMay who spoke of the importance of NCO's in the Air Force today (1:147). By March 1953, the class load was expanded to 60 students, and improvements were made in training aids and classroom facilities. (See attachment one.) By April, a lecture hall capable of

holding all 60 students had been built, and classrooms were remodeled in keeping with modern knowledge on how to improve learning. The curriculum was updated and refined, and by mid-1953 had become fairly stable. By now the school had proven itself to be a definite management improvement factor, one that could counteract the losses of officer personnel which were to take place in the latter part of 1953 (1:149). Surveys of graduates showed that the men were applying lessons learned at the school to their duties once they returned to their jobs. In the period when the 7<sup>th</sup> Air Division was called upon to expand its organization and mission without increased manpower, the NCO academy proved to be exceptionally worthwhile (1:149). The development was not without problems, though. Early in the development effort apathy, unbelief, and even opposition to the academy were rampant. The offenders were not the NCOs, but officers who felt the whole effort was a waste of time. In time, the increased enthusiasm and drive of the NCOs who had completed the course began to win the officers over, and they became believers (1:4).

During this same time period other bases were devoting time and effort to improving their NCO's. The 1020<sup>th</sup> USAF Special Activities Wing at Fort Meyer, Virginia was one of these units. They developed a NCO Leadership School as part of the Wing NCO Prestige Program. This school lasted 40 hours (4 hours a day for 10 days). The curriculum included: Essentials of Leadership, Drill and Command, Military Law, Air Force Writing, Speaking and Expression, and Counseling. To be eligible to attend students had to be: a master sergeant (technical sergeant if approved by Wing Headquarters), supervisor of three or more personnel, minimum of 12 months retainability, hold a 7-level in their AFSC, not waiting issuance of TDY, PCS, leave, or other orders which would be effective during the school, and not undergoing or awaiting court-martial

sentence (4:43). The first class began 15 February 1954, and had 15 students.

In the mid-1950's the Air Force was faced with the greatest potential loss of personnel since 1945 (2:66). To cope with this problem the 21<sup>st</sup> Air Division and the 815<sup>th</sup> Air Base Group, Forbes Air Force Base, Kansas began a NCO course to emphasize leadership and management. The objective of this school was to, once again, reinstate the senior NCO as a leader, not to teach the junior airman how to become one (2:67). Other objectives of the course were to: provide training for all NCO supervisory personnel, emphasize position and prestige of NCO's, foster initiative, and develop military bearing, forcefulness, and self-confidence in NCO's. The course at Forbes was so successful it was accepted as the basis for the NCO Academy at March Air Force Base, California (2:67).

During the mid-1950's the entire Air Force was struggling to cope with the effects of the Korean War. During the war years the Air Force had expanded rapidly, and many were advanced to the NCO ranks based on their technical ability. During the war very little time was given to training these new NCO's in traditions and customs of the Air Force (3:15). Again, the answer to these problems was to establish a NCO school, this one at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington. This school was being established at the same time as the NCO Academy at March Air Force Base, hence the name NCO School--to avoid confusion. The mission of the Fairchild NCO school was to offer refresher training to NCO's on various phases of Air Force organization, administrative procedures, policies, and customs and courtesies of the service. The school was established to meet the need for more effective utilization of NCO's, to reinstate the NCO as a leader by emphasizing initiative, willingness to accept responsibility, military bearing,

and welfare of subordinates (3:16). The curriculum was divided into five phases totaling 44½ hours of instruction time over a period of one full week. The student load was 39. The school carefully selected and trained its instructors, and boasted modern and up-to-date instruction methods using audio-visual aids. (See attachment two.)

The last early NCO academy we will be exploring is the Military Transport Service (MATS) Academy. The MATS Academy opened at Orlando Air Force Base, Florida on 19 October 1955. Again, it was part of the over-all Air Force movement to realize the full value of its NCO's (8:140). According to the MATS unit history of July through December 1955: "MATS had 12,000 senior NCO's, most of whom directly supervised, or in some degree, controlled the activities of other people; and their leadership and management ability had a direct bearing on MATS achievements. As manpower and skill levels became more critical and MATS equipment and missions became more complex, it was evident that development of better NCO leadership would yield increasing dividends" (8:140). The idea of establishing a MATS academy at Orlando, patterned after the academies already in operation in the Strategic Air Command (SAC), came from General George Cassady of the MATS Continental Division. Major Donald Brandt of the Operations Training Divisions was detailed to explore the possibility of establishing a MATS Academy. Major Brandt made numerous trips to the SAC academies, and after gathering data on operating procedures and course criteria, he reported to his superiors that the SAC academies had been enthusiastically accepted, and were doing an excellent job improving the quality of NCO's (8:141). On the basis of the information provided by Major Brandt, MATS staff agencies approved the idea, and began plans to establish a MATS academy. The first priority was to find a



suitable place for construction of the school. MATS planners wanted a place with year-around good weather, and also agreed that the base had to be a MATS base, tenant bases would not even be considered. After considerable deliberation, planners finally determined the Orlando Air Force Base would be the site of the new MATS Academy. The three primary objectives of the new MATS NCO Academy were: first, to reacquaint the NCO with his leadership and supervisory responsibilities. Second, to equip him to accept and carry out these responsibilities, and third, to reemphasize to command and supervisory officers the need to use him to his full capacity (8:146). Secondary objectives were to: 1.) Assure the position, prestige, and dignity of the NCO. 2.) Foster initiative and self-confidence of the NCO. 3.) Develop the esprit-de-corps requisite to be an effective NCO. 4.) Encourage the acceptance of responsibility in the training, career progression, and general welfare of subordinates (9:7). According to a press release from Orlando Air Force Base: "Air Force leaders have long been aware that the accomplishments of many Air Force missions is dependent on effective leadership as displayed by NCOs. The mission of the MATS academy is geared to assist the NCO to assume his proper role in the Air Force" (8:Tab h). The new MATS NCO academy opened on 19 October 1955, and on 22 November 1955, 125 senior NCO's graduated from the first class. The course consisted of 220 hours of instruction in areas such as: Leadership, Management, Military Justice, World Affairs, and Effective Oral and Written Expression. Also included were subjects such as Drill and Command, Parades, Customs and Courtesies, and Athletics (8:Tab g). To be selected to attend the MATS Academy students had to meet the following prerequisites: be holding a supervisory position, be career minded, have at least one year remaining in the current enlistment, be

performing duty in a 7-level AFSC, not be awaiting issuance of TDY or PCS orders which would become effective while TDY to the academy, possess minimum character and efficiency rating of excellent, not be undergoing or awaiting court-martial sentence, and possess clearance of interim SECRET or higher (8: Tab h). The MATS Academy even boasted an awards program. An Honor Graduate award was given to one student based on over-all outstanding performance on the basis of academic evaluation and ratings by instructors and peers. The Commandant's Award was given to the student demonstrating the highest standards of leadership and military aptitude.

While doing the research for this paper I discovered that there is a lot of truth in the saying "The more things change the more they stay the same". The overriding themes that drove establishment of these early NCO academies were the fact that NCO's had to learn to do more with less, and the fact that the once distinct line between officers and NCO was beginning to blur. NCO's were taking on more and more of the responsibilities once held by commissioned officers. The same can be said of today's Air Force. The line between commissioned and non-commissioned officers continues to blur as senior NCO's take on more responsibility. We are still in the throes of learning to do more with less, despite the relentless operational tempo we face. By focusing on why early NCO academies were established, a brief history of the early schools, and objectives of the schools you too can see how much, yet how little, things have changed. As we march into the future on the paths blazed by the pioneers who preceded us, we must always stay focused on where we have been so we may better see where we are going.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS A PERSON POSSESSES

LOOKS, SIZE, STATURE

ATTITUDES, EGO, CONSCIENCE

EACH MAN HAS HIS OWN PERSONALITY

ATTACHMENT ONE: TRAINING AID, WEST DRAYTON NCOA



ATTACHMENT TWO: FAIRCHILD AFB NCOA CLASSROOM

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57 AD 4 814 Air Base (44)

Falcon 0 AFB

1 Feb 54 - 2 Feb 54

PROMOTIONS

From 1 Feb 54

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The February promotion quota for the 57th Air Division units totaled 433 promotions to all grades.<sup>4</sup> All promotions were accomplished by 23 February, and the following was a breakdown of promotion quotas by unit for the Air Division.

	<u>M/Sgt</u>	<u>T/Sgt</u>	<u>S/Sgt</u>	<u>A/1C</u>	<u>A/2C</u>	<u>Total</u>
814th ABGp	4	10	37	40	51	142
92d Bomb Wing	3	10	39	36	39	127
99th SR Wing	3	9	38	52	62	164
Total:	10	29	114	128	152	433

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

In keeping with the current plans and policies of the Air Force, it is desirous to place more responsibility in the hands of the Non-Commissioned Officers within the various commands of the USAF. During the war years, with the rapid expansion of the Air Force, many personnel were given advancements to the Non-Commissioned Officer ranks because of their technical ability. Due to the war, very little time could be given to the training of these personnel in the traditions and customs of the Air Force.

With these facts in mind, the NCO Advisory Board at Fairchild Air Force Base requested the establishment of an NCO Academy (name changed to "School" because of the duplication in titles between this school and the one being initiated at March Air Force Base, California) to fulfill these needs. A full week of instruction was recommended by the Board with a curriculum that includes the phases of Air Force Policy, customs and traditions which the Board deemed necessary in the

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4 TWX, 15AF, DPRPP 24280, 3 Feb 54. Exhibit 11

development of a good Non-Commissioned Officer.

The mission of the Fairchild Air Force Base NCO School is to offer refresher training to selected NCO's in various phases of Air Force organization, administrative procedures, policies, customs and courtesies of the service. The subject matter of the school has been divided into five phases and comprise a total of 44<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> hours. Thirty-nine NCO's are scheduled to attend each class, 13 from each tactical wing and from the air base group. The subjects stressed are leadership, discipline and customs, administration, security and defense, and self improvement. Instructor personnel for the School were carefully selected and trained for their specific duties, and modern and up-to-date instruction is provided through the use of Audio-Visual Aids.<sup>5</sup>

Also in keeping with the NCO Leadership Program, dining halls have been placed in operation for use by NCO's at both Fairchild and George Wright Air Force Bases. NCO Advisory Councils for both the Air Division and Air Base Group were also set up. Greater responsibility was also afforded many top ranking NCO's by placing them in positions normally occupied by officers. Sixty-four of Fairchild's NCO's are holding officer vacancies, ranging from first lieutenants to majors.

The NCO school was established to meet the need for more effective utilization of our NCO's, to reinstate the NCO as a leader by emphasizing initiative, willingness to accept responsibility, military bearing and welfare of subordinates. A continuing program to accomplish these ends has been set up at Fairchild Air Force Base.

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5 Ltr, Hq 57ADiv, "Fairchild Non-Commissioned Officers Academy",  
1 Feb 54, w/4 attachments. Exhibit 12