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USAF SENIOR NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER ACADEMY

THE ORIGIN OF THE USAF NCO ACADEMY

by

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BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

THE ORIGIN OF THE USAF NCO ACADEMY

This background paper provides the reader historical information on the introduction and development of the original Air Force noncommissioned officer academy. Peripherally[?]; it also offers pieces of history that provides insight into the origin of the Air Force noncommissioned officer corps puzzle. The first factor discussed is the events that led to the transformation of the NCO from a technician to a leader. This is followed by the establishment of the NCO academy as an institution for professional NCO development. Finally, the academy's unique mission and far-reaching objectives are identified.

Prior to World War II, the noncommissioned officer was considered to be a tough talking individual whose only job was to scream at new recruits. The image matched Sergeant Snorkle of the Beetle Bailey comic strip. There was too much emphasis placed on the first part of the term "noncommissioned officer". But the war and the introduction of the airplane transformed the NCO into a technician and eventually into a leader.

During World War II, the NCO was responsible for keeping the air machines and support equipment prepared for the war effort. Thousands of unskilled men, mostly new to the military, enlisted and immediately were exposed to an environment that required specialized skills and technical abilities (6:56). The technological leaps that occurred in aviation prompted a demand for senior enlisted who could accept more responsibilities and effectively lead men.

As the war wound down, the Air Force recognized that they were not getting full value from the NCO corps in the area of supervision. For the most part, NCOs were still highly paid technicians. Commissioned officers, on the other hand, were the supervisors and the NCO assumed that only the officer was qualified to supervise (9:1). Commanders realized that the NCO was changing into a new breed. The skills acquired during the war in the application of technical skills could also be used in supervisory tasks. Two steps were required to accomplish this change. The first was to re-orient the capacity of the NCO toward management and supervisory responsibilities. The second step, and just as equally important, was to change the "modus operandi" by getting command and supervisory officers to release the reins of control and delegate responsibility and authority to the NCO (9:1). This accentuated the need for NCOs to be better educated in supervisory and leadership skills. Since this was a completely new concept; it took some time, but it eventually resulted in the establishment of the noncommissioned officer academy (NCOA).



In 1950, General John K. Cannon, USAFE commander, established the Academy of Leadership and Management in Wiesbaden, Germany (6:57). This academy provided the foundation for the first NCO academy. The origin of the NCO academy was started by a small base in SAC's 7th Air Division in England. The 3911 Air Base Group was tasked with the development, curriculum, and inherent problems of the first NCO academy.



In August 1952, Lt Col Robert B. Templeman, Commanding Officer of the 3911 ABB, discussed the establishment of a Noncommissioned Officer Academy with Major Author H. James, the Commanding Officer of the 3911 Operations Squadron. Major James was tasked with establishing an NCO Academy at RAF

Station West Drayton. He was further tasked to develop the entire course outline, purpose, aims, methods, and curriculum for the Academy (10:18).



Major James began this tasking by visiting the 7th Army's NCO Academy in Munich, Germany. This academy has been in operation since the late 1940s. The academy in Germany taught a six week course to 160 students. Major James observed the entire operation to transfer curriculum, training aids, and presentation methods to the new Air Force NCO Academy. He assembled this information into a one-week course that consisted of 15 hours of leadership, 8 hours of drill and command, and 4 hours of ground safety (10:18).



Lt Col Templeman suggested Personnel Management as an additional area of curriculum. This increased the course length by two weeks. Major James consulted with MSgt Charles F. Green, an instructor in the Air Force Personnel Management Course operated by the 19th Bomb Group. His expertise was critical in curriculum development on Personnel Management. The curriculum was increased to 60 hours consisting of the following:

scribble?



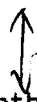
- Part I.....15 hours.....Leadership
- Part II.....4 hours.....Drill and Command
- Part III.....32 hours.....Personnel Management
- Part IV.....9 hours.....Miscellaneous Subjects

The curriculum was approved by Lt Col Templeman. The first class was scheduled to start on 3 November 1952 with 13 students. Lt Col Templeman gave the opening address to the first class. The classes met Monday through Friday 0900 to 1700 for a period of two weeks. The first class graduated at 1000 on

15 November 1952. Graduating exercises were conducted at the base theater. The guest speaker for the graduation was Colonel Howard A. Davis, Chief of Staff, 7th Air Division. The second class of 15 students began on 17 November and graduated on 29 November 1952 (11:21-22).



The early stages of the NCO academy had some problems. The first was the lack of funding. Initially, funds did not exist for the academy and growth was based on resources and materials on hand, but on 9 March 1953 the 7th Air Division General Order Number 10 officially established the command NCO Academy at the 3911th Air Base Group, West Drayton, England (7:6-7). This order officially recognized the academy as a separate institution and provided manning authorizations. The classrooms were renovated to provide a teaching atmosphere and teaching materials arrived from diverse sources, including the U.S. Embassy in London (12:15-17). Once funding for the academy was secured, leaders concentrated on another problem.



In the early stages of the academy apathy, disbelief, and even opposition to the academy arose. This problem came mostly from officers who felt the whole program was a waste of time. Many objected whenever key NCOs were tasked as students or instructors. However, as graduates began to show their enthusiasm and display the great benefits to their commanders, the opposition ceased. Still, aggressive command emphasis and follow-up was required (9:3-4)



Once the NCO academy at West Drayton was established, the curriculum identified, and resolved the initial problems, it became necessary to develop a plan for continued development of an educational program. Originally the purpose of the school was to establish and maintain the dignity and prestige

of the NCO (9:28). The methods that provided the guidance toward this end was the NCO academy's mission and objectives.



The mission of the NCO academy is to provide instructions to prepare selected noncommissioned officers with an effective and progressive approach to the command task (9:33). The instruction was tailored to noncommissioned studies. The class covered the following courses: personnel management, leadership, command, public speaking, military law, supply, organization of the Air Force, and other applicable topics (1:2). The local commanders selected Master Sergeants and outstanding Technical Sergeants to attend the NCO academy. The academy used a conference-type approach to instruction. The environment of the school emphasized the "prestige" of the NCO and its mission. Eventually, the mission statement changed to "prepare students for more advanced leadership and management responsibilities (6:58)". Nevertheless, the mission statement reflected on the student NCO and the his purpose for attendance. The objectives add purpose and meaning to the mission.



The original objectives of the NCO academy are:

- a. Acquaint the senior NCO with the supervisory responsibilities which are inherent with his rank, and to equip him with the knowledge and techniques he must possess to execute these responsibilities.
- b. Improve the status of the senior NCO, and his value to the Air Force, by re-establishing him as an aggressive, affective leader, willing and capable of assuming his proper role in the administration and operation of assigned functions.

- c. Provide the NCO with an approach to the solution of those problems encountered in leadership.
- d. Prepare the NCO to project more effectively his queries, recommendations, and solutions while administering personnel management.
- e. Develop command voice and bearing.
- f. Foster a willingness to accept responsibility.
- g. ^{vc} Instruct those essential techniques utilized to train personnel.



These objectives provided the necessary guidance for instructing the NCO the administrative skills required for an Air Force in transition and increased responsibilities delegated from commanders and officers. The school by now 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. Many follow-up studies of graduates were made by the academy staff and these showed that airmen were applying the lessons they learned in their one month training course. Their training in leadership enabled them to rely more on psychological rather than disciplinary weapons in the achievement of their assignments. Speech training developed their instructional ability. The training in drill and command restored a soldierly manner and bearing which was lost by many NCO^s in the postwar years. Personnel management courses brought them up to date on modern methods of dealing with the men who worked for them. The NCO academy proved to be worthwhile in the austerity period when the 7th AD was called upon to expand its organization and mission without increased manpower (9:149).

The change of the NCO from a technician to a supervisor came about because of the airplane and World War II. The NCO was no longer a mechanic, he was also a leader and a teacher. The increased range of responsibilities of the NCO brought up the necessity for a school that could teach the required skills. The concept of a school for NCOs became a reality in a base in England in November 1952. The school was not to be a temporary solution to a growing need. Therefore, the mission and the objectives of the academy established the base from which it could grow and adapt in the future.



The success of the NCO academy at West Drayton helped to establish other NCO academies in SAC. Major James assisted in the final plans for the 15th Air Force NCO academy at March Air Force Base, California, the 2nd Air Force NCO academy at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana, and 8th Air Force NCO academy at Bergstrom AFB, Texas (2:9). Air Force Headquarters viewed the academy as a possible solution to the NCO prestige build-up (1:2). Several other major commands followed the lead taken by SAC and established their own academies.



The challenge of the NCO academy is to turn out graduates who can think, act, and communicate more effectively (6:60). The need to teach NCOs new responsibilities became apparent at the end of the war; however, a constantly changing environment with cutting edge mentality of the post war years brought on the need for NCOs with not only technical skills, but also better managerial and leadership skills. The NCO academy was created for this purpose.

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