

### Essay 3

#### The Academy in Wartime

##### Life at the Academy During World War II

Ever since the attack on Pearl Harbor, members of the Academy faculty have considered the paramount problem of the year to be what this school could do to help in the national emergency. Investigations and discussions to this end have been the concern of the Principal, various departments, and individual teachers for uncounted hours. As was to be expected of all true citizens at such a time, realities were the only things considered. Gestures essentially futile, no matter how photogenic, seemed too wasteful for words. But the realities were not easy to discover. Almost all generalizations on the Second World War have agreed on one point--its vast difference from any other war that man has known. It is the war in which "never before have so many owed so much to so few." It is a war for sheer survival, "the war nobody wanted." It is not only a soldiers' and a sailors' war but a war of scientists and mathematicians, even a combination of all four, a war of the air forces. Largely because of the unexampled nature of what had been happening so swiftly, schools and colleges received at first from the government only what seemed like general advice. At the outset, it was clear enough that certain measures encouraged in previous wars were not being recommended this time, such as student corps, close-order drill, maneuvers, or trench digging. Soon it became evident, too, that neither the Army nor the Navy was much interested in well-intentioned efforts of laymen to give pre-service courses in the various branches of military or naval science. Selective service would attend to all that later on, doubtless rearranging many premature plans and preparations of individuals. In the meantime the question of what to offer to boys of 16 to 19 years of age who wished to be doing something that really counted found no convincing official answer.

The answer, to be sure, was given by both the Army and the Navy at the conference of independent boys' schools at Pawling on December 19 and 20, only a little more than a week after Pearl Harbor. Although it may have seemed not quite like a revelation to some Academy students to whom it was repeated, mainly because it sounded remarkably like what had already been told them in the schoolroom, it has been reiterated by the same sources and appears now to be accepted by the majority of students below the draft age. At the meeting, Lt. Col. B.W. Venable, U.S.A., explained the impracticality of an ROTC or an SATC in schools at the present time and expressed the opinion that good schooling of mind and body is a source of strength in any field of army activity. He advised that schools continue their programs with as little disruption as possible. At the same meeting, even more specific recommendations came from Lt. Commander Burton Davis, U.S.N., who stressed the Navy's need for thousands of well-trained men, and he especially deplored the present deficient training in mathematics. Hundreds of men who would make good officers, he said, must be turned down because the Navy does not have time to teach them the mathematics which they should have learned in school or college. Commander Davis suggested the following fields of instruction to contribute to preparation for naval service: Morse code, plane

trigonometry, solid geometry, quadratics, physics, chemistry, shop mathematics, vocational training, elementary navigation, principles of radio, elements of telephone and radio communication. He also emphasized the need for more thorough inculcation of obedience and self-discipline. Subsequently recommendations almost identical were made by the National Council of Chief State Officers at Nashville, Tenn., on May 10-14, and officially endorsed by the Departments of War and Navy and by the United States Office of Education. Only today, the writer received from the Navy department a release for the press and radio entitled "Navy to be Represented at National Education Association," to be held at Denver, June 22 to July 2. In it are found these sentences: "The educators are to be asked, as one contribution by them toward the war efforts, to place greater stress in secondary schools on mathematics and physics so that pupils on completing their studies will be better equipped to take part in the Navy program, without facing the necessity of taking refresher courses in these subjects . . . The least possible disturbance of the educational program of secondary schools, other than the renewal of emphasis on mathematics and physics as basic requirements for success both in the Navy and in industrial life, will be the keynote of the Navy's message to the convention. Previously at educational meetings Navy officials have stated the Navy's educational policy as one that calls for men who have sound instruction in the basic studies such as English, mathematics, and the physical sciences, with emphasis being placed on physical conditioning." The breadth and wisdom of this program is apparent in its provision for service both in war and in the subsequent peace, and for the training of both mind and body.

Meantime the faculty had come to much the same conclusion. A careful reappraisal of the curriculum--especially with cognizance of the changes adopted for 1942-43, the growing trend toward more and more courses in mathematics and science, and the popularity of the special study groups in the Morse code, navigation, radio, etc.--demonstrated that few alterations, if any, were necessary to comply with the wishes of the Army and the Navy. Some of the factors which led to this conclusion were these. All graduates of the Academy have a thorough grounding in algebra and plane geometry. In 1941-42 the number of students completing algebra and plane geometry was 206, and of these the majority will go on to trigonometry, solid geometry, and college algebra. The number taking Mathematics 4 (trigonometry, solid geometry, and college algebra) was 152; Mathematics 5 (the calculus), 32. In the middle of the year, 22 students enrolled in a special course which completed trigonometry by the end of the year. Thus the total completing elementary mathematics was 206; the total having at least trigonometry (over 90% having more) was also 206. The total Academy enrollment in 1941-42 was 744; of the Senior class, 211.

Last year registration in science courses was as follows: Biology, 43; Chemistry, 187; Physics, 171; Physical Sciences (Chemistry and Physics), 63. Of this number, those completing college preparatory work in either Chemistry or Physics or both were Chemistry, 102; Physics, 105; Physical Sciences, 35.

Enrollment in these courses, naturally took place before this country entered the war. Next year, with the inducements plain, enrollment in Physics and Advanced Mathematics will undoubtedly be high, although at this time it is not possible to give

exact figures. In addition, the special course in trigonometry will be continued, and there has been added a course in elementary aeronautics under an instructor who is a licensed pilot and open only to students who have taken or are taking Mathematics 3 and a major course in Physics. The voluntary groups for study and practice which have been run for the past five or six years will continue in meteorology, marksmanship, medicine, First Aid, navigation, Morse code and communication, radio, and conversation in modern languages. Unpaid volunteer groups of students will work on Academy grounds next year as they have this year; and next year the care of dormitory rooms will be entrusted to students.

Lest it be feared that the Academy has turned into a concentration camp for mathematics and the sciences, last year's enrollment by departments may be reassuring: Art, 50; Bible, 14; Business, 22; English, 731; French, 572; Geology, 12; German, 87; Greek, 47; History, 246; Latin, 411; Mathematics, 666; Mechanical Drawing, 32; Music, 23, Biology, 43; Chemistry, 187; Physics, 171; Physical Sciences, 63; Social Studies, 14; Spanish, 60.

The broad and flexible athletic program of the Academy also seems singularly well adapted to the purposes outlined by the War and Navy Departments. Variety enables each boy to choose the sport which fits him best, and in that sport to develop the competitive spirit, the sense of cooperation and team play, good sportsmanship, and the will to win which has for centuries traditionally made the good soldier. There is no better conditioning for the rigors of combat flying than such contact athletics as are found in football, lacrosse, hockey, or basketball. Coordination, control, and precision are developed in such sports as baseball, tennis, squash, or golf. Endurance as well as coordination comes in rowing. So on through the list, each sport has a practical value of its own. And other extra curriculum interests of the student teach practical lessons in co-operative effort and democracy, as well as reveal abilities not always called upon in classroom or athletic field. In short, the elements and qualities which the experience of years has demonstrated to be the best basis for the education of youth between the ages of fourteen and nineteen years seem to hold good for war as well as for peace: accuracy, thoroughness, honesty, manliness--each in the fullest possible human conception of the word.

If much of this sounds unoriginal, one has only to turn to the sort of questionnaire sent out by the Navy seeking confidential information about candidates for commissions. Here ratings are requested on a person's Adaptability, Determination, Thoroughness, Resourcefulness, Tact, Accuracy, Self-reliance, Judgment, Executive Ability, Aggressiveness, Cooperation, Leadership Ability, and Temperament. Questions are asked about his health, discretion, outside activities, associates, and educational background. These are not subjects which can be taught in a cramming school. These and such other aspects of education as awareness of the world about one, whatever its changing nature may be, and a sense of responsibility to play one's part in it are the business of education, as any teacher worthy of the name well knows. Bargains, mark-down sales, remnants, notions, and patent medicines have no more justification in secondary education in war than they have in peace.

At the same time, one would be far astray to conclude that the Academy is untouched and unmoved, or unwilling to be moved, by the war. For over a year the same winds that have been blowing through the outside world have swept through the school, leaving many changes behind them. Some would have come, war or no war. Some were already made before war was declared. Some are clearly by-products of the war. The most important developments in the past year, arranged more or less chronologically, are as follows:

1. 20 members of the staff have entered or are about to enter government --service military, naval, or scientific.
2. Over 800 graduates have been reported in service, and the list is far from complete.
3. The Academy curriculum was revised to permit more flexibility of choice. American History was made a required subject.
4. Classes in First Aid were conducted by the Athletic Department.
5. Fraternities were abolished.
6. A group of student volunteers for work on Academy grounds was organized. Student care of dormitory rooms arranged for next year.
7. A bureau for student summer employment on farms and at camps was set up.
8. A series of conferences for vocational guidance was begun, to be continued next year.
9. Special courses in trigonometry and elementary aeronautics are offered for 1942-43.
10. Since last spring, the school has contributed to funds for a United Nations X-ray unit and an ambulance and for the Christian Fraternity budget over \$6000.

- M.R. Williams

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