

OCS Newsletter

April 2024 | Issue 09



OCS Class 64
"Calm in the Chaos"



Inside THE ISSUE

- Reflections on lessons learned from the March student leadership team
- Interview with CPT Nicholas Capparrimo, 215th Regional Training Institute
- Officer Candidate Spotlight with William Mauro
- Reviews of the movie, [Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory](#), and book, [Combat Actions in Korea](#)

02

Lessons Learned

"The time we set aside to develop each other between each IDT is evidence of our shared commitment to collectively succeeding." – OC DeShay Harper

05

Commander Interview

"Be honest, be humble, and know your strengths and weaknesses." – CPT Nicholas Capparrimo

08

In The Community

OCS Class 64 hits the pavement to honor fallen Soldier, Pat Tillman, at the 20th Annual Pat Tillman Run.

NEWSLETTER CONTENTS

Class Reflection	Page 1
Lessons Learned – Platoon Leader	Page 2
Lessons Learned – Platoon Sergeant	Page 3
Commander Interview with CPT Nicholas Capparrimo	Pages 4 – 6
Officer Candidate Spotlight	Page 7
In The Community	Page 8
Book Review	Page 9
Movie Review	Page 10

CLASS REFLECTION

Written by OCS Class 64

March IDT marked a significant turning point for Class 64: earning Intermediate Status. This provides candidates with additional privileges, less trainer supervision, and a modified uniform. However, as stated in the OC Guide, “with more privileges comes

more responsibility to ensure training continues.” And indeed, it has. Class 64 has not let off the gas despite a 6-week break between March and April. We have met several times, in-person and virtually, to study Troop Leading Procedures, practice issuing OPORDs, and refined our study material all with the goal to pass Phase III and eventually graduate. In between class preparation, we’ve built upon our class Esprit de Corps and found time for more leisure activities including a Grand Canyon hike, the 20th Annual Pat Tillman Run, the 35th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March, and routine check-ins to ensure the health and well-being of one another over the long break. Still, we remain cognizant that Intermediate Status is not permanent, and we need to remain focused and determined moving ahead. Like Benjamin Franklin’s Constitutional Convention advice, “It’s a republic, if you can keep it.”



OCS Class 64 celebrates Intermediate Status with a post-drill meal after March IDT.

CLASS LEADERSHIP REFLECTION – Platoon Leader

According to the Officer Candidate (OC) Guide, the platoon leader (PL) “commands the platoon and is responsible for the morale, welfare, and discipline of his or her subordinates.” Additionally, the PL is “ultimately responsible for everything the platoon does or fails to do.”



Class Platoon Leader (PL)

Written by OC DeShay Harper

Being selected as platoon leader for March IDT, I was to embrace another opportunity to grow. Building from my previous opportunity of being a class platoon sergeant, it was reinforced that resiliency and personal growth are essential aspects of leadership. While I didn't initially achieve a passing score on my previous leadership evaluation, I understood the value of the feedback I received. I then made the necessary changes, ultimately leading to the successful outcome of this month's training.

Officer Candidate School (OCS) gifts a demanding yet rewarding opportunity to develop the skills needed to become a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Army. However, the peer support and camaraderie our class embodies have alleviated some of the load from this challenging process. While the assigned platoon leader and platoon sergeant play crucial roles in each IDT, it is the collective demonstration of unique skill sets and the effort put forth by each officer candidate that ensures our success as a class.

This IDT, our class came together to ensure each member successfully completed their 4-mile run requirement. We achieved this by running and working out together, offering daily encouragement, and sharing knowledge on how to enhance running mechanics and speed. As each officer candidate leads a busy life, the time we set aside to develop each other between each IDT is evidence of our shared commitment to collectively succeeding.

At the heart of the Army is the concept of brotherhood(sisterhood), and every success story is reinforced by a strong support network.

Together, we have completed fourteen months of training; with just four months remaining, our unity and strength are our greatest assets.

CLASS LEADERSHIP REFLECTION – Platoon Sergeant

According to the Officer Candidate (OC) Guide, the platoon sergeant (PSG) “is the principal assistant to the platoon leader (PL).” The PSG assumes command of the platoon in the absence of the PL and assists in several ways including, accurate account of platoon members and accountability of sensitive items and equipment.”



Class Platoon Sergeant (PSG)

Written by OC Andrew Wilcox

I learned a lot from my month as platoon sergeant of OCS Class 64, which was thankfully a success. I owe that success to the coordination and effort of all my fellow candidates and a big thanks to OC Harper as platoon leader for the role she played in that success.

If I were to pick one word to represent what helped me to get a “go” it would be synergy. Synergy is the cooperation of multiple organizations or individuals to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects.

A leader in the Army needs to strive to be great as an individual but to be an effective leader is more a measure of his or her ability to bring a diverse group of people together to accomplish a task; like the conductor of a symphony.

In my personal experience, to accomplish a state of synergy, I have had to learn to step aside, elevate others, and make decisions when they need to be made and when it is my place to make them.

I am sure that these lessons will serve me well if, by the grace of God, I become a platoon leader.

Just a few drills left until the real work begins, keep calm in the chaos out there!

COMMANDER INTERVIEW

Written by OC Charles Foster

This month, we interview CPT Nicholas Capparrimo of the 215th Regional Training Institute and formerly with 1/158th INF.

Q: Why did you choose Infantry as your branch?

A: I originally enlisted in 2009 and was a 25N in the Signal branch. After a couple years of doing that, I knew in OCS that I wanted to commission as an Infantry Officer and get into the combat arms field. It was a great fit for me personally.

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

A: There are many important skills for an Army leader to have, strong communication skills, calm/cool composure under stressful situations, personal tact, etc. But I'd say the MOST important skill for a leader is compassion for soldiers. As a leader, you will demand a lot of your soldiers, so balancing that with compassion and being able to recognize when soldiers deserve you to show it is very important. It can have a drastic impact on individual and unit morale.

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

A: The best part about being a commander is being able to have a direct impact on unit training, missions, and assignments. A good BN commander will give a company commander a lot of freedom of maneuver as well as responsibility to train and run their company how they see fit, given basic left and right limits and guidance. You will have a good amount of leeway to train your soldiers how you want and can be a spokesperson for your company to higher command regarding getting assignments.

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

A: The most challenging part of being a commander is learning how to fairly and appropriately deal with individual soldier issues as they arise. As a new LT, you have your single PLT to deal with any soldier family, mental, legal issues that may pop up. As a Company Commander that is heavily magnified, and it seems like everyone has an issue you need to be involved with at some level. To add onto that, there will be some situations when you will need to recommend punishment or leniency to your BN commander for disciplinary action of one of your soldiers. Being able to look at every situation individually and unbiased will be vital to the overall climate of your company.

Q: How do you handle conflict on the team?

A: I'm a big proponent of getting everyone in the same room and addressing issues head on and directly. It can be really awkward, and its uncomfortable for a lot of people, but clearly and directly addressing any issues that arise immediately will ensure the effective operation of your unit in the long run.

COMMANDER INTERVIEW (Cont.)

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

A: I've tried to maintain my unit's motivation by engaging subordinates and junior enlisted soldiers through NCO/OPD's, key leader sensing sessions to air out grievances or communicate issues, competitions, and team bonding via company cookouts or other similar type events. I have found that a big piece of keeping your soldiers motivated can be accomplished through behind the scenes interaction or representation of your company. For example, the sensing sessions and cookouts are all forward-facing, easily identifiable things that your soldiers see you doing for the company; however, the conversations they don't see you having with superiors on their behalf, or "putting yourself on the line" behind closed doors for your soldiers and representing them in a positive light speaks volumes when it comes to motivation. I've had soldiers make mistakes on and off duty, and my ability to communicate issues, my recommended repercussions and how I am effectively handling situations at my level rather than actions taken by higher, has been tenfold more effective in motivating my soldiers. If your soldiers KNOW you support them behind closed doors, they will be willing to charge the hill and take a piece of key terrain when told to do so.

Q: What advice would you provide to Officer Candidates?

A: Be honest, be humble, and know your strengths and weaknesses. Lean on NCOs to execute your plan. You don't need to know everything, but you do need to know what you don't know and know where or who to go to find it out.

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

A: I look for an LT that is observant, quick to learn, slow to speak, and coachable. I've had great LTs that demonstrate these qualities and are coachable, and I've had good LTs that are physically fit and know their job but are too confident in that knowledge and because of that, are not very coachable. I personally would rather have a lieutenant that is mediocre but coachable and observant rather than one that is a rockstar but not coachable and think they know everything.

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

A: Find out the expectations of your commander and based on those, observe your platoon in all aspects you can. Do not jump right in and try to be a big change agent for your platoon. They have been there, many times, much longer before you arrived, and will be there long after you leave. Leadership, is like steering a big ship in the ocean. Small adjustments can make big changes in the future. So do not attempt to come in and change everything overnight. Additionally, communicate your expectations for your key leaders. Your expectations should be a combination of your own personal expectations that are measurable and goal oriented, as well as nesting in some of those expectations your commander has for you.

COMMANDER INTERVIEW (Cont.)

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

A: I think the biggest challenge the Army faces today is the changing and evolution of the battlefield in regard to technology and the opposing force. The American Revolution, WWI, and WWII were all uniformed enemy forces, identifiable on the battlefield. Then Vietnam introduced guerrilla warfare. Iraq and Afghanistan (mostly) fell into that category, but with increasing global tensions, China, Russia, and Ukraine, a LSCO battlefield is not out of the realm of possibilities for future conflicts. Evolving technology runs hand in hand with that. The enemy's ability to use drones or attack a force's cyber capabilities is an increasing threat to the Army's development of the battlespace and presents many challenges for how we operate.

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

A: In short, I've become more empathetic. When I initially enlisted, and even when I first commissioned, my perspective on physically or mentally weak individuals was unempathetic and abrasive. I was dismissive to those that couldn't do what I could. Not everyone is combat arms, not everyone operates at an elite level of determination, grit, endurance and physical capability. That does NOT devalue their contribution or service to their country. Everyone can improve and should strive to be better physically, mentally, and spiritually, but a person's inability to run 5 miles in 40 minutes or ruck 12 miles in 3 hours does not make their service any less valuable than those who can. In some MOS' where that physicality is required, we shouldn't be lowering the standard for the sake of retention or inclusion. Rather, as leaders, we should be guiding and facilitating 1 of 2 paths; individual progression and improvement to meet that job specific requirement or changing career fields to something better suited for that individual service member. In both cases, we owe it to all our soldiers, the ones performing well and maintaining those standards, and those who aren't meeting the standards to help shape, mold, and support their movement into a field better aligned with their abilities and interests.

Q: Finally, what book(s) would you recommend to aspiring leaders and what is one of your favorite quotes?

A: Battle Leadership, by Captain Adolf Von Schell and Actions in Korea, by Russell A. Gugeler.

"With monstrous weapons man already has, humanity is in danger of being trapped in this world by its moral adolescents. Our knowledge of science has outstripped our capacity to control it. We have many men of science, too few men of God. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants, and ethical infants. We know more about war, than about peace. More about killing, than about living." – General Omar Bradley

OFFICER CANDIDATE SPOTLIGHT

Written by OC William Mauro



In this month's OC Spotlight, we sit down with Officer Candidate William Mauro. He joined the Arizona Army National Guard as an O9S with the intent to attend Officer Candidate School. OC Mauro was born and raised in Kalamazoo, MI. In 2006, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps as an O311, basic rifleman. He was stationed in Twentynine Palms, CA, served on active duty for four years, and deployed twice to Iraq (2007, 2009) with 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance BN. He moved to Phoenix in 2019 and works in Healthcare Marketing.

Q: Why did you join the Army National Guard?

A: I joined the Army National Guard because I missed serving in the military and I'm not getting any younger. Fortunately, my time spent away from the military as a corporate desk jockey has safeguarded my knees and lower back well enough that there's still plenty left for Uncle Sam.

Q: How would people describe you?

A: I try to keep "hard-working" and "reliable" at the top of the list. I'm generally reserved and guarded with people at first. But I tend to loosen up over time if I get to know you. I would rather listen to others than speak right away.

Q: What is your educational background?

A: I have a Bachelor's degree in Economics from Western Michigan University, a Master's degree in Marketing Research from Michigan State University, and last year completed my green belt in Lean Six Sigma from Villanova University.

Q: What does leadership mean to you?

A: Leadership is about serving others and setting a positive example for others to follow – most importantly during challenging times. It's a thankless path but a rewarding one, nonetheless.

Q: What do you want to branch after OCS?

A: Infantry. It's the only branch that truly interests me, it's all I wanted to do in the Marines, and becoming an infantry officer is why I joined the National Guard and applied for OCS.

Q: What are your long-term career goals?

A: Stay in the Army until I'm no longer able, and dodge corporate re-orgs and private equity acquisitions to the best of my ability until I can retire.

OFFICER CANDIDATES TRAIN COMBATIVES

Written by OC William Mauro

During February and March IDT weekends, OCS Class 64 spent Sunday mornings training on combatives. In March, officer candidates squared off with one another in competition to practice what they'd learned from February on basic grappling techniques.



OC Doane (right) coaches classmates on combatives.

“Basic combatives training serves as an introduction to interpersonal violence. This allows us to start developing a fighter’s mindset in soldiers. More advanced training, grappling, and sparring forces soldiers to focus and solve problems while under pressure,” said OC Jefferson Doane, a brown belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, who helped co-instruct the combatives classes.

Special thanks go out to SFC Pugsley and MSG Bentley (Ret.) for their time spent teaching OCS Class 64 on combatives.

OFFICER CANDIDATES AT 20TH ANNUAL PAT TILLMAN RUN

Written by OC William Mauro

On Saturday, April 13th, OCs joined over 20,000 people who participated in the 20th Annual Pat Tillman Run. The 4.2-mile run/walk takes place in Tempe, AZ and honors fallen Soldier, Pat Tillman, while also raising money for the Pat Tillman Foundation, which provides academic scholarships and leadership development to veterans and their spouses.

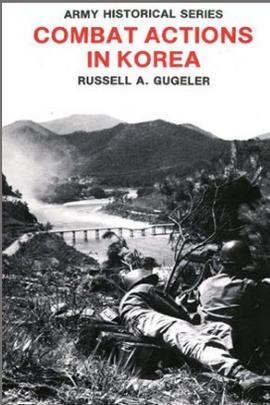
“I admire Tillman’s sacrifice and commitment,” said OC Todd, “I’m reminded often of his quote, ‘Somewhere inside, we hear a voice. It leads us in the direction of the person we wish to become. But it is up to us whether or not to follow.’”



Officer Candidates William Mauro (left) and Matthew Todd (right) prior to start.

BOOK REVIEW

Written by OC William Mauro



Combat Actions in Korea

By Russell A. Gugeler

Publish Year: Originally 1954; Revised in 1970

★★★★☆ (4.0/5.0)

Combat Actions in Korea is a collection of accounts describing actions taken by Army units (squads, platoons, companies, and batteries) during the Korean War. Per the Forward, it was written primarily for junior officers, noncommissioned officers, and privates who had not yet been in battle. However, despite its antiquity and original audience, it remains of significant value to all Soldiers as the Army moves toward large scale combat operations (LSCO) with peer and near-peer threats. Because as Brigadier General (Ret.) Douglas Kirkland writes in the opening monologue, “Some of the tools and procedures of battle have changed, but the basic conditions of combat have not.”

I find this book to be directly relevant to OCS as it details many of the leadership attributes and competencies that we are taught in order to be effective leaders. Some of the stories I was already familiar with such as Heartbreak Ridge and the Chosin Reservoir. But I had read them with awe of the heroism of prior generations. This time, I read through these stories with an academic lens knowing that as a future Army officer I may be called upon to directly apply the lessons learned myself.

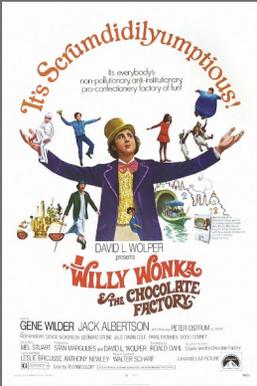
I overlaid several lessons from OCS on war fighting functions, terrain and weather analysis, operations orders, and patrolling to analyze each chapter. For example, command and control was a significant issue at the Chosin Reservoir when several officers and non-commissioned leaders were killed, perimeters were stretched thin, and fratricide from air support left troops without clear leadership. The terrain on the Korean Peninsula made it challenging for effective observations and fields of fire and the weather, at times 30 degrees below zero, would cause machine guns to malfunction all of which made it extremely challenging to defend unit perimeters against enemy attacks.

The final chapter outlines a combat patrol where examples of an effective operations order and troop leading procedures are demonstrated. Effective patrolling techniques are also described along with the use of call for fire to support the patrol’s mission and commander’s intent.

A single page review does not do justice to the myriad of lessons available in this book and I highly recommend it to all Soldiers. It is available for free download on the U.S. Army Center for Military History site, here: <https://history.army.mil/html/books/030/30-2/index.html>.

MOVIE REVIEW

Written by OC Jefferson Doane



Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory

Directed By: Mel Stuart

Release Date: June 30, 1971

★★★★☆ (4.0/5.0)

Willy Wonka's *Chocolate Factory* isn't just a whimsical candy wonderland; it's a metaphorical landscape for life's trials, triumphs, and transformations. It encapsulates the essence of adventure, self-discovery, and the pursuit of excellence much like the journey of OCS. At the heart of the movie lies the story of Charlie Bucket, a humble boy with big dreams. His journey mirrors the challenges faced by OCS candidates as they navigate rigorous training, physical demands, and mental fortitude. The enigmatic Willy Wonka represents the epitome of leadership, creativity, and eccentricity while his factory serves as a testing ground, where only the most deserving individuals can claim the ultimate prize. Likewise, OCS functions as a crucible, shaping individuals into resilient and adaptive leaders capable of facing diverse challenges.

The whimsical and often perilous adventures within the chocolate factory symbolize the trials and tribulations of leadership. Whether navigating a river of chocolate or confronting the dreaded Oompa Loompas, Charlie and his fellow contestants must rely on their wits and teamwork to succeed. Similarly, OCS candidates must collaborate, adapt, and overcome obstacles as they strive to earn their commission. Central to the narrative is the theme of perseverance and integrity. Despite facing temptation and adversity, Charlie remains true to his values and emerges as the ultimate victor. Likewise, OCS candidates must uphold Army values throughout their journey.

The ultimate reward in both the movie and OCS is not material wealth or recognition but rather personal growth and transformation. As Charlie inherits the chocolate factory, he embodies the principles of leadership and stewardship, ensuring its continued success. Likewise, OCS graduates emerge as confident and capable leaders, entrusted with the responsibility of leading and inspiring those under their command.

In conclusion, this movie offers more than just a tale of candy and adventure; it serves as a profound allegory for the journey of self-discovery and leadership. Through its colorful characters, captivating narrative, and timeless themes, the movie resonates with the challenges and triumphs experienced by aspiring officers in the Army National Guard's Officer Candidate School. Just as Charlie discovers the true meaning of leadership, OCS candidates embark on a transformative journey that prepares them to lead with integrity, courage, and excellence.

Special thanks go to OC William Mauro, OC DeShay Harper, OC Andrew Wilcox, OC Jefferson Doane, OC Charles Foster, and OC Matthew Todd for their writing, editing, and photo contributions to the April 2024 issue of the OCS Newsletter.

Photo credit(s): Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory (www.blogspot.com); Combat Actions in Korea (<https://history.army.mil/html/books/030/30-2/index.html>).