

Remarks by Edward W. Ross
The Artillery Officer Candidate School
Hall of Fame
Induction Ceremony
May 22, 1997

Since I retired from the Army in August 1984, I have worked in the Office of the Secretary of Defense in one capacity or another. Immediately before assuming my current position three years ago, I was the Director of the Office of Prisoner of War-Missing in Action Affairs. In that job, I traveled around the world attempting to account for the nearly 90,000 service people still unaccounted for from World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War.

Those experiences instilled in me a deep appreciation for the bravery and the sacrifices our comrades have made over the years. That is why I am extremely proud and honored to be inducted into the Artillery Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame today and to have the privilege of representing my fellow inductees. Of all the groups I have ever been a member of, I am prouder to be a member of no other group of people more than this one

When I was asked to speak for all 34 of us being inducted today because time would not permit each of us to come up here individually, I gave a great deal of thought to what I should say. At first, I thought I should direct my remarks to those of you who are here to witness this occasion, expressing the gratitude I'm sure each of us feels as we are inducted. But after much reflection, I have decided to direct my brief remarks to my fellow inductees.

While I do not know the personal histories of each and every one of you, I know many, if not most of you, are a lot like me. Many of you were drafted into the army, while others enlisted for one reason or another. However we came into the Army, we were selected for officer candidate school because we demonstrated potential for leadership at a time when our country needed leaders.

But if you are like me, you did not think of yourself so much as a leader of men, but as a young man setting out on a journey to an unknown destination. Whether we entered OCS during World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War, more than any physical destination, each of us went looking for ourselves.

I was drafted into the Army in 1965 after dropping out of College. God only knows what might have become of me had I not been accepted to OCS and commissioned an officer in the U.S. Army Artillery.

It is true for me, and I am confident that it is true for most of you, every door that subsequently opened to us probably would not have opened had we not gone through what we went through here at Fort Sill, had we not learned the lessons this place had to teach us.

Despite the hardships—the Jark marches up MB-4, the harassment by upperclassmen, the cold nights on guard duty and in the field—I now look back on my experience here with only fond of memories.

My only regret is that so many of the young men who passed through here with us did not survive our countries wars in which they were called to make the ultimate sacrifice. Six members of my own class gave their lives in Vietnam.

From my office in Washington, I watch with great interest and some trepidation the many changes our Army and the armed forces of the United States

are undergoing today. Budget cuts and the spiraling cost increases in weapons and technology are resulting in a smaller, more technology-reliant force. Tomorrow's wars will not afford us the time we've had in the past to train and deploy new officers and enlisted personnel. Future wars, for the most part, will be fought with the force in being at the outset.

Many might argue that the Officer Candidate School that you and I knew has been relegated to the pages of history. Perhaps they are correct, I do not know. What I do know, is that this country will continue to produce men and women like us, who, loving our country, and in search of ourselves, will come forward to serve with honor and distinction whenever and wherever we are required.

I know that you share with me the sentiment that as long as we live, we will always remember the few short weeks or months we spent in OCS. We will always remember entering here as boys, leaving as men.

I want to thank my fellow inductees for being who and what you are and for the honor and privilege of representing you. And I want to thank MG Randall Rigby, commanding general of Ft. Sill and the Artillery Training Center and all the members of the Field Artillery Association for this moving and memorable ceremony and for all they do to keep the spirit of OCS alive.