

the sole purpose of illuminating the battlefield but also for harassment, to focus attention on a particular area, and to orient units at night.

A smoke mission can provide obscuration, mark a target for attack by CAS, orient friendly troops, or direct attention to a specific area, giving the commander a means of deception. Smoke is also a highly mobile means of deception, because smoke rounds can be fired rapidly almost anywhere on the battlefield. Additionally, these rounds are relatively safe; a smoke shell has no fragmentation and cannot normally cause civilian casualties unless it scores a direct hit on an individual.

On the other hand, we must not for-

get the psychological effect of fire support on the enemy. The frightening noise, concussion, and flash of the explosives are some of the important features of fire support. Simply letting the enemy know that we have these means and will use them is often enough to scare him.

Finally, we must remember that during Operation JUST CAUSE, field artillery was used at Fort Amador to reduce U.S. casualties when an M102 howitzer (105mm) was used in the direct fire mode against a Panamanian Defense Force barracks, which caused the enemy to surrender.

There are many missions for fire support in irregular conflicts, and all of

them can enhance a unit's combat power. A maneuver commander must decide to use this firepower to its full capacity in order to inflict maximum casualties without sacrificing the courage, determination, and lives of his soldiers.

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Attending Graduate School

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Many company-grade officers consider attending graduate school at some time during their careers. Most of them encounter unforeseen problems associated with attendance and must learn from experience.

Drawing on the experiences of several officers who have completed graduate school, I would like to offer some suggestions for any officer interested in pursuing a full-time, fully funded graduate program.

As you think about working toward an advanced degree, do not become discouraged by any preconceived notions about your academic potential. The Army offers many different programs and alternate specialties that require advanced degrees. This is a key point; the availability of Army-funded graduate schooling is driven by the Army's need for personnel with advanced degrees in specific academic disci-

plines. Certain specialties, language skills, or minority status may put you in higher demand than you realize. Your Army experience and maturity can also give you an advantage in the competitive admissions process.

Ask senior officers, branch representatives, and others in the Total Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM) about graduate school possibilities. Work with them to coordinate your release for schooling. Problems may arise in the requirements of your secondary specialty, branch needs, funding constraints, and your personal desires, and you must monitor your own progress. Start early in expressing your desires, and be persistent.

Once the idea of graduate school becomes a real option—and perhaps even earlier—the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) will be one of your first hurdles. This standardized test is

good for five years at a college admissions office. You will probably need to take it during your advanced course or your company command. It is offered only a few times a year, so find out early when and where the GRE is administered in your area. You can usually register at your post education center or at a local university.

Prepare by studying a GRE preparatory book, previous GRE tests (sold by the testing institute), or a preparatory course offered at a nearby institution. At least know the format of the test, the types of questions on it, and all the directions, so you won't have to waste time reading the same instructions during the test.

A math refresher is beneficial for most officers to review the basic algebra and geometry required to complete the test. You may receive conflicting guidance on how to prepare for the ver-

bal portion. Apart from memorizing vocabulary, practice the types of questions, such as analogies, so you will understand the thought processes involved. The analytical portion also requires extensive practice to master these types of questions. The length of the test, seven 30-minute blocks, will tire anyone, so take practice examinations to get back into the habit of taking long tests.

If you take the test twice, universities will consider the better score, so it is important to plan two test dates before the final admission date cut-off. In addition to the standard test, check to see if the schools to which you will apply also require a GRE subject-area test. These tests also require considerable practice and study.

Along with the GRE process, begin applying for admission to the graduate programs that offer the degrees and subjects in which you are interested. Read catalogues at post libraries and send for application packets. Discuss your choices with PERSCOM to determine whether they have any preferences as to which school you attend. Be careful when you begin choosing schools. The reputation of a graduate program varies on the basis of its current faculty strengths. This means that any preconceptions you may have formed as an undergraduate at the school may no longer be accurate or valid.

Talk with someone who is familiar with your proposed field of study, and rank-order the schools. Some programs such as history require a student to focus on a particular area within the discipline. Make sure that the school you choose offers the course of instruction you want. Also consider that some faculty members may be on sabbatical or otherwise unavailable to teach you as a master's candidate. Some schools are also Ph.D.-oriented and hence not tailored to master's programs.

Apply to at least three schools that vary in acceptance criteria from easy to more difficult. Do not apply to so many schools that you spend too much time and money on the application packets. You will need to obtain letters of recommendation as part of most



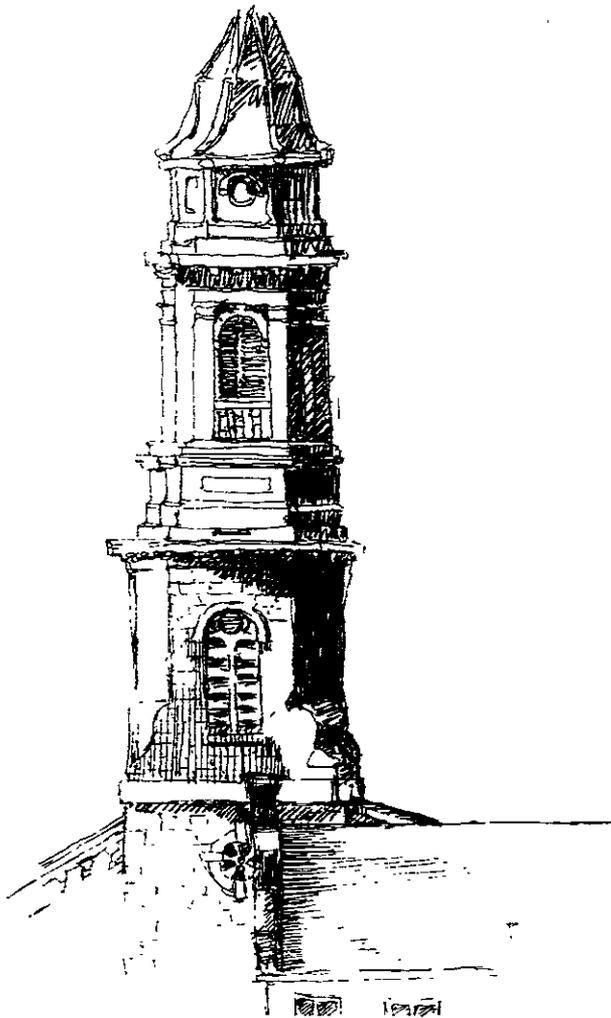
applications. Emphasize to the people you ask for these letters that they should stress your ability to succeed in an academic environment. A letter steeped in military job descriptions or accomplishments may not convince a university administrator that you are a qualified candidate. Do emphasize your experience and maturity in admissions packets, though, because they should help you get into a school.

Be ready for some specific requirements that vary from school to school. Some universities, depending on their graduate programs, require a writing sample, and this is difficult for someone who has been out of school for several years. Be ready to write a personal essay on your goals for the period following graduate school. Then tie these goals to some form of academic endeavor, not just your next Army assignment. Schools also need your

undergraduate transcripts, which may take time to obtain.

Once accepted to a school, begin planning your start date. Determine when you must leave your job and report to the school. Summer sessions usually are easier academically, but they are harder for the school to arrange administratively. If you want to attend a summer term to ease your transition back into studies, plan early. Also work some leave time into your move, because you will not be able to take leave again until after your first semester.

Prepare for life away from a military post. You will probably live away from any post or base and consequently have less access to the associated facilities. Selecting a school that is near a military base would be ideal, of course, but academic excellence should be your primary consideration in choosing a school.



Plan on spending more of your income for housing and subsistence. Your allowances probably will not cover housing costs, and commissary and post exchange facilities will not be available. Your family will use CHAMPUS for medical costs, but it covers only 80 percent of the allowed costs on most types of treatment. Plan on enrolling in a CHAMPUS supplement plan, if you have not already done so, to offset coverage losses. Your family should also be on the Delta dental insurance plan. As an active duty member, you cannot use CHAMPUS or Delta. Your medical expenses will be reimbursed through the U.S. Army Student Detachment. In both cases, keep copies of all receipts and forms.

Finally, before leaving your post, make sure your power-of-attorney, identification card, Department of the Army photograph, and physical are up

to date so you won't have to make any special trips once your classes begin.

While at graduate school, you will be assigned to the student detachment at Fort Benjamin Harrison. The detachment personnel will give you an initial packet containing blank forms and the *Student Handbook*, an excellent guide with instructions and telephone numbers you can call with your questions. The detachment will handle your pay, leave, and personnel actions; the staff completes forms and sends your leave and earnings statements through the mail.

Each school will have a student liaison officer who reports to the student detachment. Among other duties, this liaison officer administers the Army Physical Fitness Test twice a year to each student and then forwards DA Form 2125 each semester (or quarter) containing the student's academic grades. The office also processes stu-

dent claims for textbooks. Although the amount for books varies on the basis of particular funding programs, you can file claims twice a year after buying the materials you need.

Once at school, you will need to readjust to life in the classroom. Graduate school will require higher standards of writing and more reading than you have ever experienced. In addition, you may be the only officer in your department, and conflicting political ideologies, moral values, and anti-military feelings often characterize the more liberal academic environment. While you learn more about society, you can also teach others about the Army, dispelling misconceptions and presenting a positive image of our Armed forces.

There are usually other officers on campus either as students or assigned to the ROTC detachment, so there will be a military presence. Although your academic studies will be your primary duty, you may want to get involved in some of the ROTC detachment activities.

Finally, your graduate school assignment is designed to prepare you for a follow-on utilization tour and future higher-level military service. Stay current in your branch and on Army developments through professional journals and appropriate correspondence courses. Take advantage of the opportunity to focus on broader military, political, economic, social, and intellectual aspects of society. Attend lectures, talk to professors, and socialize with other graduate students. These educational experiences will help you see the larger picture.

During this period, you will be away from the familiar military environment, but you will also find the university community and your graduate schooling a rewarding experience.

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