

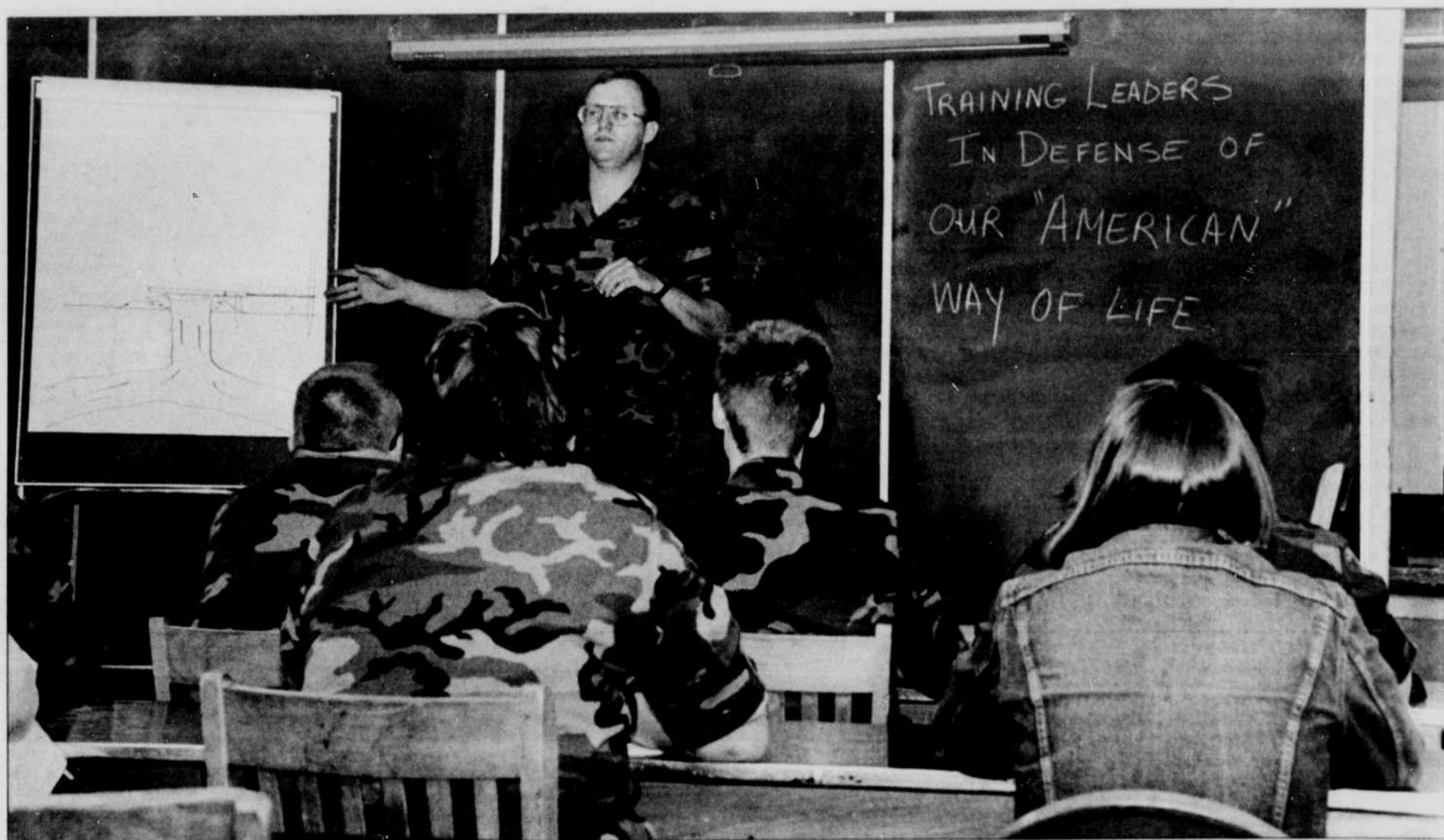


Photo by John Giustina

Mixing Rifles and Books

BY DEBORAH JANES

Thirteen large-framed young men and women in camouflage fatigues and spit-polished boots huddle around a man bellowing instructions. The man holds up a string of lights, demonstrating how to set an early warning system that will alert the soldiers that an invading enemy is near. He finishes his explanation and then barks his command: "Then you go out and do your dastardly deed."

The scene could be from the movie, "Platoon," or live news footage of the Vietnam War. It is, however, just a routine drill at the University Reserve Officer Training Corps.

These people, along with 90 others, are University students who double as ROTC cadets. As cadets, they take military science courses in addition to the regular University classes and attend a six-week Advance Camp (boot camp) between their junior and senior year. Finally, upon graduation from the University, they serve in the Army or National Guard for a minimum of three years.

The placement of this 168-year-old organization on more than 400 universities in the United States has long been the center of controversy on those campuses. The University is no exception. Since its inception in 1915, some University students, faculty and community members have objected, saying the University should not be involved with an organization that trains people to kill. Conversely, ROTC students and faculty argue that the ROTC emphasizes leadership training, preparing

Some say University ROTC trains killers, others say leaders.

the cadets for managerial positions in the army and not for war.

"For every infantry man (a person involved directly in combat), there are 10 people supporting him," says Major Russ Peacock, an assistant military science professor at the University.

ROTC graduates usually are involved in leading a squadron of privates. In preparation for this responsibility, they take management courses in their senior year to learn about military ethics and justice, the Army writing style and its officer performance rating system.

While some plan to use their ROTC training to launch them into a military career, others are banking on a position in active duty that pays \$21,000 a year and prepares them for a high-level civilian job after three years as an Army manager.

"Once we're commissioned, we are very marketable in the civilian world," ROTC junior John Resnick says. "The chief executives of huge corporations look at the ROTC cadets with great esteem. The cadets know what authority is, and that's how those corporations work."

Respect for authority is a large part of Resnick's character: His father was a Navy commander for 23 years.

"Without authority, we have anarchy. We have to find a balance between the two," he says.

Resnick is firm in his beliefs and ex-

presses them articulately. However, he does not believe his outspoken nature runs contrary to the obedience expected of ROTC students.

"Sometimes I must circumvent my own values if they are outweighed by the importance of the situation. It's beneficial to do what is asked of us. If a drill sergeant tells us to drop and do pushups because one of the guys hasn't buttoned his uniform right, well, it's just easier to drop and do them."

Nikki Powell, a University junior and ROTC student, also has been conditioned to not question the authoritarian structure of the military.

"If you don't have a chain of command, you don't get anything done. People are relying on you," Powell says.

"You learn to have faith in your leaders. You can't personalize everything they tell you to do."

Her father, however, wonders if her feisty nature will fit into the military mold. "She will always speak her own mind. If she gets pushed the wrong way, she'll push back. Sometimes I wonder how she will fare in the military atmosphere," Gordon Powell says.

The ROTC teaching adherence to authority and the Army dogma are points of objection for some people outside of the organization.

"The military is about blind obe-

dience," says Ron Phillips, a member of the Coalition Opposed to Registration and the Draft. "You lose your right to citizenship. You're in your own society and justice system, and you have no right to say no."

Phillips draws on his experiences as a soldier in Vietnam to explain his criticism of the military's emphasis on authority. "In a war you must have discipline; the most vicious wins."

"But who were the most guilty in Vietnam? It was the grunts that came back with the guilt that the officers told them to pull the trigger and then blamed them."

While the ROTC professors and administrators like to focus on managerial training, they admit combat readiness is a part of their program.

"Hopefully we are preparing a very small proportion of the ROTC people for war. We want them to be the thinking members of the military," says Army Lt. Col. Lee Gragg, the director of the University ROTC.

However, in a time of war, it is important that the officers be familiar with all operations of combat, Gragg maintains. The students therefore learn in their freshman and sophomore classes the fundamentals of infantry such as map reading, land navigation and military terminology. Their junior year primarily is spent preparing the students for the six-week summer boot camp.

Many students at this time also join one of the extracurricular clubs such as the rifle team or Marauders. In Marauders, they receive additional training in such areas as nuclear, chemical and biological warfare; weapon familiarization and mine setting.

This training culminates in six weeks of intensive combat training at Fort Lewis in Washington state. During this time, they get paid \$700 and receive

Deborah Janes is a senior journalism/political science major from Eugene. She has freelanced for the Emerald for three years.