MAJOR GEORGE L. CONVERSE
Commandant of Cadets

Major Converse has been actively serving the government in its war preparation.
A SHORT HISTORY OF THE R.O.T.C.

AND

PROBABLE EFFECTS IN EVENT OF WAR

BY

GEORGE L. CONVERSE
COLONEL, U.S. ARMY, RETIRED

PREPARED FOR THE COLUMBUS, OHIO,
CHAPTER OF THE TORCH CLUB

MAY 16, 1930.
When the Educational Bill known as the Morrill Land Grant Act was passed by Congress in 1862, its ultimate effect was to create a fund, the interest of which was to be "inviolably appropriated by each state which may take and claim the benefits of this act to the endorsement, support, and maintenance of at least one college, where the leading object shall be without excluding other scientific and classical studies and including military tactics to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanical arts in such manner, etc." You will note that the teaching of the arts and sciences is permissive while the leading objects to be obtained - agriculture, mechanical arts, and military tactics, are mandatory. Ohio accepted under this act. This fund is an endowment, is deposited with the State of Ohio, draws 6% interest and forms what is known as the irreducible debt of the state. Immediately upon the organization of the Ohio Agriculture and Mechanical College in 1872, the arts and sciences, took control of the institution, and while agriculture and the mechanical arts were tolerated, military was left largely to shift for itself and for many years the college authorities made no real effort to carry out the intentions of the framers of the law as they were in honor bound to do. After 25 years of existence the authorities of the college or university, as it then had grown to be, appropriated less than $200.00 per year for the support of the military department. As late as 1900 the president of the University said to the military instructor reporting to him for duty, that he was opposed to military, wished he could get it out of the University but as he could not, we would do the work as well as may be. In the earlier years and until about 1905, when rules and regulations were adopted for use in the military departments, the officer in charge had little authority in his own department and for many years the president of the University granted excuses from required military work, without consultation with the head of the department, and many times over his objection. The adoption of student rules and regulations for the military department placed the department on a firmer-footing. With the better situation thus attained, both as to standing in the University and work accomplished, came the idea of utilizing the product of the department, as was done in other departments of the University and a first effort was made in the direction of placing graduates in what is now known as the National Guard, but which was then a State organization except when accepted for service by the Federal government, but the State Military authorities refused to even consider the proposition desiring to select their own officers in their own way. The method or selection of officers then was by election by the troop company or battery and a knowledge of military matters was one of the least requirements. At the present time selections to fill vacancies are made by regimental or company officers and candidates are required to pass an examination before being commissioned. I have never heard of a candidate failing to pass such an examination. Promotions are also dependent on passing examinations at the present time and conditions are much better than 25 years ago. The War Department and the college were equally guilty in the early days of neglecting to enter into the spirit of the Morrill Act as related to military. In order to promulgate regulations for aiding the colleges in this military work the War Department asked and received from Congress authority to detail an army officer in charge of the military department of Land Grant Colleges and to issue certain arms and equipment for their use but the regulations were meager and carelessly drawn. As the colleges or universities grew in numbers so grew in numbers the military departments but the War Department having authorized an officer for duty on this work took refuge behind the law and decreed that an officer meant one officer, regardless of the number of students in the military department.
After several years of struggling under adverse conditions General Wood, then Chief of the Army Staff, was approached on the subject of college military work and received the suggestions put forward with a very open mind and on several occasions the subject of improved college work and utilization of its product was brought to his attention. About this time the general staff of the army attempted to form a reserve for the Army and put into effect the idea of requesting soldiers discharged at the end of enlistment to join the reserve. Being in effect a volunteer movement, it failed as practically all volunteer movements in this country have failed, though at one time the U. S. Army reserve amounted to about 350 men and no officers. It finally dwindled to nothing. Not long after this General Edward Orton interested himself in the military department of the Ohio State University and wrote a most excellent paper on college military work which he read before the Land Grant College Association at their annual meeting in Washington about 1911 or 1912 and by request General Wood and his aides were present at the meeting. The discussion after the reading of the paper lasted the entire afternoon and so impressed was General Wood with the paper that he caused copies of it to be sent to all Land Grant colleges and to all military posts and military schools in the country, but he was able to produce no change of attitude toward college military work in the War Department, in the way of improved conditions. In 1914 came the war in Europe and with it a realization that wars were not impossible, as many people really believed. Most military men realized after a few months that this country was inevitably to be drawn into the war and there was much discussion in the War Department and elsewhere of various plans for Military preparedness. The question of reserves was again agitated but with no positive conclusions. General Wood inaugurated his Plattsburg camp in 1915 as a means of educating a few young men in military matters which camp was attended by the then Professor Orton and other men of mature age and mental attainments. The college military departments at this time visioned an outlet for their product if the question could be brought to the attention of the proper authorities. Mr. Ralph Marshon, a graduate of the Ohio State University and an engineer of national reputation, together with General Orton, became interested and worked to enlighten the proper authorities, begun in earnest. Mr. Marshon spent time and money in the endeavor. He circularized all of the Engineers Clubs in the United States asking them to communicate his facts to their members of Congress. He circularized every Senator and every Congressman and many other organizations in the effort to introduce a proper military course in every Land Grant College and to use the product of these military departments as reserve officers stressing the fact that nowhere else could the proper material be obtained in the quantities needed. General Orton made a trip to Washington and interviewed the War Department at length on the subject. In 1915 Congress undertook the work of framing a defense act which was to include, of course, the subject of a reserve, and General Orton's visit to Washington developed the fact that the War Department thought little of what then was generally known about Washington as the Ohio plan for reserve officers. Correspondence with the general staff brought the information that Mr. Hay, the Chairman of the military committee of the House of Representatives, had evolved a plan of enlisting a fixed number of young men with the rank of cadet in each troop, battery and company in the army who after a proper period of enlistment were to receive commissions in the Reserve and that no other plan for Reserve Officers was acceptable to him. To reach Mr. Hay then, became a necessity and in casting about for an avenue of approach General Orton remembered an acquaintance in Virginia whom he had once assisted with very opportune advice and help in a business matter a few years before and who had expressed gratitude therefor, and a desire to return the obligation. This man was communicated with. It developed that he was a neighbor and a close personal friend of Mr. Hay and that he could and would arrange an interview
between Mr. Hay and a committee from the Ohio State University. The committee including General Orton, met Mr. Marshon in Washington at an appointed time and communicated with a representative of the general staff at the War College, who suggested that nothing could be done and the time of the committee would be wasted in further efforts. When informed that Mr. Hay was to see the committee the next day he became interested and very active, asked for a copy of the plan and over night rewrote it, destroying its effectiveness from the original point of view.

The interpolation of the general staff were declined and the interview with Mr. Hay satisfactory. At Mr. Hay's suggestion when the Defense Act was being considered in committee of the whole house next day and the section relating to reserve officers was reached (Section 57, I believe,) Mr. Gard of Ohio moved that the Ohio plan be substituted for Section 57. Mr. Hay arose and accepted the substitution and the Ohio Plan for reserve officers was thus incorporated in the Defense Act of 1916, and has remained undisturbed by modifications to the present time and is the law upon which is founded the regulations governing R.O.T.C. in Land Grant Colleges and military schools and colleges.

There are 53 Land Grant Colleges or Universities in the United States with Military Units organized under the Defense Act and in addition a number of military schools. There are 221 Senior Units with an enrollment in the basic course of 72,123 and 13,629 in the advanced course. The basic course is the requirement in the first two years of college work, the advanced course being the requirement in the junior and senior year and is, in Land Grant Colleges, voluntary but once elected it becomes a prerequisite for graduation. To elect the advanced military course, a student must have the recommendation of the Commandant of Cadets and the President. Under the terms of the Defense Act it requires of a candidate for a commission in reserve, four years of college military work and one summer encampment. These requirements made the law ineffective in the situation in which the country found itself in 1917 as the R.O.T.C. was just organized but not producing, so war was declared with no organized reserves. Although the Lusitania was sunk in 1915, we were too proud to fight until after the Presidential election and in 1917 war being declared against Germany it was again necessary to employ makeshifts for defense as it had been necessary to do in all previous wars. The regular army was able to muster about 5,000 active and retired officers for duty. The National Guard about 12,000 officers of whom not less than one-third were mentally or physically unfit, a total of about 13,000 officers with which to organize and train armies - both officers and men-transport men and supplies to the field of operations and at once bear our share of a "war to end wars" or "save democracy" whichever slogan sounds most pleasing to you. Little surprise will be manifested at the statement that less than 30% of the regular army officers, men who were students of the military profession and who had spent years of effort in preparation for such an emergency, were allowed to go with their commands to the front but were held in training camp doing preparatory work while National Guard officers, some with no training and other men with 90 day training as emergency officers were placed in command of troops in the field. In this emergency, officers' training camps and the Students' Army Training Corps were organized to supply the deficiency in officers. Fortunately Congress passed the selective draft law putting to an end the volunteer system for obtaining men in the ranks. These officers' training camps were, as you all know, camps established throughout the country where selected men from 22 to 28 years of age were, by a course of 90 day intensive training in military, more or less
prepared to care for in camp and on the march and finally to lead into battle
your son and mine, and were, of course, unsatisfactory as to results but were
a necessity of the situation because of the neglect of the representatives of
the people in previous years to acknowledge a situation which was self evident.

The S.A.T.C., the substitute for R.O.T.C., was another makeshift, in-
complete in conception, costly as to money, and barren of results. The re-
sult was inevitably from the organization of the board which planned it, if
for no other reason. Made up of some ten or twelve members, professors from
different universities, not one of whom was connected with a college or uni-
versity where military had been the part of the college course, it was doomed
to fail before it began. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were wasted in
equipping colleges to enable them to train students as emergency officers,
but results from this source were impossible even if the armistice had not put
an end to its activities at so early a date.

The volunteer system for both officers and men in ranks which had been
in force in all of our previous wars, and a failure in each, was fortunately
abandoned in this war except so far as State Troops were concerned and those
organizations were taken over by the Federal Government as organizations but
their numbers were so small, both in men and officers, that except for senti-
ment they might have been abandoned. Their ranks had to be filled from the
draft and officers supplied from the Officers' Training Camp. Some State
organizations increased their commissioned personnel with men who had never
had a day's previous military experience. Records of revolutionary times are
filled with instances of lack of volunteers for our armies at important
moments. Desertions were so common that punishment for that defense was im-
possible and some states refused to furnish their quota when called upon by
the Continental Congress. (Page 335, 336, 337 "Valor of Ignorance" by Homer
Lee).

In the Civil War after the first enthusiasm wore away, enlistments
dwindled and when the President, a second and third time, called upon the
states for troops in order to produce their quota they offered bounties for
voluntary enlistments, the State of Ohio paid about 55,000,000 of dollars
in bounties and that method of raising volunteers created a class of soldiers
known as bounty jumpers — men who enlisted for the bounty, deserted at the
earliest possible moment to re-enlist if and when the opportunity offered.
General Sherman at Atlanta lost 20 regiments in the march by expiration of
term of enlistment and refusal to re-enlist. A National Draft Law finally
became necessary. (Page 333, 334, 335 "Valor of Ignorance" by Homer Lee).

In the Spanish American War, because of its briefness, results so far
as enlistments were concerned were not so bad. One New York Regiment upon
call for volunteers answered in the Armory 100% strong, but when brought for-
ward for muster into the United States service could furnish but 15% of their
enrolled strength. Another mustered in 50%. Few, if any, regiments entered
Federal service with their full complement of officer and men as required by
law. These losses in their enrollment strength were due to age, physical
condition, family conditions and many other causes. When in the service in
this war these organizations demonstrated the necessity for officers educated
in a military way. When the camp at Chattanooga was moved to Knoxville in
August or early September of '98, there were over 6,000 cases of typhoid fever
in the hospitals, though there were only about 45,000 troops in the camp.
Casualties in Spanish-American War (Philipines, Cuba, Porto Rico) 293 - Diseases 3,691, admissions to hospital on September 10, 1898, 158,000, about 10% of entire force. About 38,000 took part in active operations, then over 43,000 pensions granted or claims filed by March 1909. (Page 340 "Valor of Ignorance" by Homer Lee). In view of the facts established in all wars to date, why preserve the volunteer system? Why the National Guard? As State troops for local disturbances, they do their part admirably and as they are largely supported by appropriations from the National Treasury, perhaps from a selfish point of view we approve of them, but a state Constabulary of 250 men with proper officers would do all required state work at a minimum cost and in addition do a necessary and needed police work. These facts and statements are not intended as a reflection on the personnel of the National Guard. There are very many fine and competent officers on their rolls who should be in the Regular Army and many men in ranks who should be used in an emergency as officers but the Volunteer system as a system seems to be a failure.

In view of the fact that war is possible, I do not say probable, some time in the future our plan of defense should be systematic and well organized at the earliest possible moment. Much has been done already by the general staff of the army but much is to be done in the future. Our defense consists of the regular army which is composed of about 12,000 officers and about 115,000 men. The National Guard with 16,000 officers and about 165,000 men at the present time, the organized reserve with 112,000 officers, 10,000 of whom are National Guard officers holding commissions in both the National Guard and the Officers Reserve Corps, a total of 130,000 officers and 281,000 men, if all are fit. It is now 12 years since the close of the World War and many officers now in the National Guard and on the rolls as Reserve Officers are inefficient because of age and physical condition. The Secretary of War's report shows there were 209,000 commissioned officers in the World War. (The New York Times reported after the war that about 85,000 of those commissioned officers had never had a day's military training before accepting a commission. That may or may not be true, but certain it is that many had no training).

The R.O.T.C. is producing about 6,000 Reserve Officers per year and we are losing from the Regular Army, the National Guard and the Organized Reserves, by reason of death resignations and so forth, about 10,000 officers per year. These figures show conclusively that unless means are taken to increase production in the R.O.T.C. in the event another emergency we will again have to resort to the 90 day training camp for officers and again produce partially trained officers to complete our officer personnel when we have at hand the means of producing the proper product if the War Department is far sighted enough to take advantage of the means offered, but to the present time they have not visualized its possibilities or if so have not sufficiently supported R.O.T.C. to produce the desired and necessary quantity of Reserve Officers. Sufficient instruction should be offered students in all land grant colleges and military schools to induce those of proper mental and physical qualifications to take the advanced course in military offered until not less than 10,000 graduates are commissioned in the Organized Reserve annually. At present inducements for entering this course are niggardly. Cadets taking the advanced course are allowed one ration per day and a small rebate on uniform which amounts to about $20.00 per year. The ration is commuted at thirty cents, while the ration for the army last year was .51 for men and .60 for officers. Common honesty demands the commuting of the Cadet ration at the army rate but even at that rate proper results will not be produced. Advanced course students should be paid not less than $1.00 per day during their college year and one uniform per year or the cost of the same commuted.
If the graduate accepts a commission in the Reserve he should be bound by contract for a period of not less than three to five years and should be furnished with uniform, side arms and field glasses. Some such arrangement would produce the desired result. Camp training for Reserve Officers to keep such officers in touch with the advances in the profession is a necessity. Being engaged in business, they cannot be expected to devote more than one camp (thirty days) in three years which would probably be a reasonable requirement. In 1928 Congress appropriated for the training of Reserve Officers only a sufficient amount to send 16,000 officers to camp, 1929 the same number, in 1930 - 17,000 are to go. As there are 112,000 Reserve Officers on the rolls, this appropriation allowed each officer to attend camp, which is now reduced to fourteen days instead of thirty days, about once in six years. Can an officer keep abreast of his profession on that basis? In contrast to the limited expenditures and opportunities for Reserve Officers, is the C.M.T.C., a yearly camp supported by the Government to which are invited young men from 18 to 22 years of age for a period of thirty day military training? These camps were instituted during President Harding's term of office and at his request to keep alive the volunteer spirit in the American people. These camps are advertised as an outing for young men. The young man attending four camps and passing a proper examination is offered a commission in the Organized Reserve. Reports show that over 90% of these young men attend but one camp. The officers' training camps organized during the World War and to which were sent some of the best material we had, not youths of 18 or 20 years of age, but young business men, mentally developed and keen as a result of business experience, proved unsatisfactory as to results even with existing war as a spur to induce the candidate but forth his best effort. The subject was too extensive to produce good results in so short a time. What is to be said then of the C.M.T.C. so far as the production of Reserve Officers is concerned? Is the volunteer spirit worth keeping alive? Past experience in all wars compared with out experience in the World War where the selective draft was enforced compels us to say no. There seems to be but one legitimate reason for the C.M.T.C. and that is their use in training Reserve Officers but as the War Department has made use of them in this way but once and decided not to repeat it, I can see but little use in maintaining these camps. The Secretary of War's report shows that since their establishment in 1921 the Government has spent $21,439,540.00 in maintaining them. A large amount of money for a very small return. Had that amount of money been spent in maintaining camps for Reserve Officers, there would have been a result worth while.

The general plan for defense of the country roughly sketched, includes the raising of six armies of approximately 360,000 each, one to be developed from the Regular Army, two from the National Guard and three from Organized Reserves. Stated in another way, each Corps Area is to raise 240,000 troops and 40,000 officers. This Corps area (the Fifth) has now on its roll about 12,000 officers out of the 40,000 required. The Officer supply for defense armies is drawn from the following sources: U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. Appointments from civil life to the Regular Army; appointment to the National Guard by the states. Reserve Officers from military colleges and military schools. Can West Point supply the necessary number of officers needed in the event of an emergency? As the corps cadet is limited by law to about 1300, the answer is no. Can the Regular Army under the law be increased to sufficient numbers to supply the needs? As the law limits the Regular Army to about 12,700, the answer is no. Can the National Guard supply them, again they are limited in numbers by law, and the organization is based on the
volunteer system, so the answer is "No". The R.O.T.C. is then the only means under the law whereby this need of trained officers can be supplied and the War Department, to date, has been content to let this supply meander along at the rate of 5,000 or 6,000 a year when 10,000 is the minimum number required. Graduates of R.O.T.C. are not professional soldiers but citizens whose college course trains them first for civilian pursuits and who voluntarily, during their college course, carry an extra burden (the military course) as a patriotic duty. If the colleges and military schools which undertake to do this work are reasonably supported by Congress and the War Department, particularly the latter, a few years more should provide the country with a sufficient number of men to supply the commissioned personnel of a defensive army and the continuous flow into the Officers Reserve will keep it fit physically and mentally to perform the required duties. Regular Army officers are a selected group of men who devote their lives to the study and practice of their profession. Entering the army either from West Point or by rigid examination, they spend most of their lives in the study of their profession. Post Graduate Schools for each Arm of the Service, Engineers, Artillery, both Coast Defense and Field, Cavalry and Infantry, exist in addition to Staff and Command schools and the War College. Every Regular Army Officer should not only be allowed to attend these schools but should be compelled to complete all work in the School for his own branch of the service and thereafter the work in all staff and command schools and the war college to fit him for high command. The man who devotes his life to the study of Military Science, providing he has the proper mental and physical qualifications, is certainly better qualified for command than the man whose first interest and necessity is business and who soldiers only as a matter of personal interest and duty to the country. If that position is correct, all Regular Army officers should be assigned to high command, general staff and all positions of military responsibility in the case of an emergency. For many years we have carried on our wars on the basis that every American citizen was born not only a soldier, but a Major General who needed no education in military matters and little military training. I see no benefit to result from the plan of defense which proposes to develop one army from the regular service, two from the National Guard and three from the Organized Reserve, if as the wording indicates all officers from high command to the lowest second lieutenant are to be furnished by these organizations. Neither the Regular Army or the National Guard has or ever can have a sufficient number of officers to organize the armies as proposed, so of necessity each must go to the Organized Reserve to complete its complement of commissioned personnel. Could not the high command of all armies be raised by professional soldiers with the way open for any one who demonstrates his ability in active operations to be promoted to high or the highest command from either the National Guard if we are to continue the volunteer system or the Organized Reserves.

Undoubtedly there are but two organizations which can be depended upon to produce the proper number of officers properly prepared for the organizations which are to constitute our defense, the Regular Army and the Organized Reserves.

If the spirit of the law underneath these two organizations is properly carried out, we can develop a limited number of regular officers for high commands, an unlimited number of Reserve Officers, physically fit and with an excellent military education fitting them for the duties which they may be called upon to perform in times of emergency -- a selective draft act to provide for the ranks and then with adequate laws to regulate an industrial mobilization we will have a real citizens' defense.
One of Oldest West Point Grads Says Fighting Japs Like Indian Wars

Retired Colonel Here

Proud of Army Gains

Col. George L. Converse, one of the oldest living graduates of

West Point, is proud of the way the U. S. Army is fighting, but if he

were running it, there'd be some changes made.

Col. Converse, who is 86 years old, listens to war news on the

radio and reads it in the newspapers, and he thinks that "things

are looking mighty good."

"But like every military man, I can see that some mistakes have

been made," the colonel, a wiry, spry man, observes. "If I were

in charge a lot of things would be different."

But he steps right there. "Anything I say on that would have to

be off the record," he adds. And then, to be sure of it, he doesn't

say any more on the subject.

Saw Service in West

He will point out, however, that the fighting in the south and

southwest Pacific is similar to the kind of fighting the U. S. Army

was doing back in 1882, when as a young shavetail only two years

out of the U. S. Military Academy, he participated in the Indian war.

He was with the Third Cavalry, out in Wyoming, when they

were ordered to Arizona to help quell the Apache uprising.

He didn't get to see or oppose Geronimo, known chiefly to present-day soldiers as the被称为 by paratroopers when they bail out, but known then as the most

vicious and wily warrior of the plains. "Even the Indians called him a bad Indian," Col. Converse recalls. "He was treacherous and mean."

The Apaches all were good fighters, in the same unorthodox manner that characterizes our current Japanese enemies. "And they were better armed than we were too," says the colonel. "They didn't use bows and arrows."

Lost Eye in Battle

He ought to know. It was a Winchester rifle that blinded him in his right eye. The American soldiers had inferior Springfields.

Col. George L. Converse started a military tradition in his family when he was graduated from the U. S. Military Academy in 1886. The Converse boys have been in the Army ever since. Here he is looking at pictures of his grandsons, the third generation of fighting Converse.

Col. Converse will be 87 years old "soon." One of these days he expects to be the oldest living graduate of the Military Academy. A Col. Jackson, class of '77, is 92 years old, and a Col. Morgan, class of '80, is 90 years old. But Col. Converse, who is as healthy as a man half his age, is confident he'll outlive them both.

"I was graduated from the academy 65 years ago next spring," he recalls. "That's not many years if you look back. It's a long time, if you look forward."

Calls Pershing "Youngster"

On May 31, 1943, Col. Converse attended graduating classes at West Point and he was honored at special ceremonies during Alumni Day. He put a wreath on the monument of Col. Sylvanus Thayer, first superintendent of the military school.

Col. Converse knows Gen. John J. Pershing well, but he points out that Pershing "is just a youngster." The general didn't graduate from West Point until 1896.

"He and Pershing never served together, although both took part in the Indian fighting. But in those days you weren't apt to see many other soldiers."

"If there were three or four troops at a post, it was considered a big post," Mr. Converse says. "There were about 25,000 men in the Army when I joined."

Commanded ROTC Here

Col. Converse was retired from active duty, with rank of a captain, in 1904. He's quick to add that he's still in the Army, although he's on the inactive list now. He was born in Columbus, not too far from his present home, 1463 Neil-av, and has been here since 1884.

In 1900 he became first commander of the ROTC at Ohio State University, remaining in that command until 1918 when he was placed in charge of selecting material for officer training camps in Ohio, Indiana, West Virginia and Kentucky.

His son, Maj. George L. Converse, Walla Walla, Wash., followed in his military footsteps, graduating from West Point in 1926. He is now retired. He has three grandsons serving in this war. They are Maj. George L. Converse IV, in Burma; Maj. W. W. Converse, in England, and Sgt. Stanley Converse, in Normandy.
Note: The following sketch of Col. G. L. Converse who was severely injured May 3 is for release without further notice in event of his death.

COLUMBUS, O., - - - An Indian bullet which cost him the sight of an eye in 1882, two years after his graduation from West Point, did not keep Colonel George L. Converse from a long life of usefulness to his country and to his state. Yet, he carried the bullet to the end of his life.

A classmate at West Point of General George Goethals, the army career of Colonel Converse was nearly ended almost as soon as he was well embarked upon it. He was shot in a brush with renegade Indians in Arizona. A long convalescence followed.

Eventually placed on the retired list as a captain because of his disability, Colonel Converse was called to Ohio State University in 1899 as commandant of cadets. To thousands of Ohio State University students he was known for two decades as "Commy". Under his charge the department grew from an enrollment of 400 to nearly 3000.

Colonel Converse was more than professor of military science and tactics. He not only taught the cadets of his day the intricacies of squads right, but along with them he taught, by precept and practice, the lessons of promptness, of orderliness, of obedience, of alertness, of discipline, and of self-reliance. His Thursday morning talks to freshman men were as much a part of university life as were the Wednesday convocations of those days at which President Emeritus Thompson spoke. Campus tradition had it that he could see more with his one
eye than other men could with two.

With the outbreak of the world war, Colonel Converse was recalled to active duty. From May, 1916 to October, 1918, he was examining officer for Ohio for the Officers' Training camps, besides his work at the university. At the end of that period he was appointed inspector for the sixth district of the S.A.T.C. As such he inspected all of the student units in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and West Virginia.

Upon the close of that duty he was recruiting officer at Indianapolis. Meanwhile he had been promoted from captain to colonel. He was again retired in 1920, with the grade of colonel. His two sons also served in the war, one with the Canadian and the other in the American army.

Colonel Converse was one of the group of Ohio State men who were chiefly responsible for the inclusion in the national defense act of 1916 of an entire section dealing with the R.O.T.C. The others included former President Thompson, the late General Edward Orton, and Ralph D. Mershon, New York engineer.

Since his retirement, Colonel Converse has lived quietly in Columbus. As spare, erect and active at 75 as he must have been as a young soldier, he was a familiar figure in the university neighborhood. In 1928 he was honored with an invitation to receive the Armistice Day review of the university R.O.T.C. brigade, then said to be the largest in the country. On Armistice Day, 1932, he was marshal of the Columbus parade.

Colonel Converse was a member of a well known central Ohio family. His father, after whom he was named, was a former congressman from this district. The colonel was born on a farm owned by his father which is now well within the city limits of Columbus.

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Col. George I. Converse, Former Chief of OSU Militia, is Dead

Col. George L. Converse, 89, of 1463 Neil Av, former head of the department of military science and tactics at Ohio State University, died Saturday in Santa Barbara, Calif., after a month's illness. He had gone to Santa Barbara in October for his usual winter visit.

A veteran of the Indian wars, Lt. Col. George I. Converse headed the military department at Ohio State for 15 years and was instrumental in the establishment there of ROTC training.

Graduated from West Point in 1880, Col. Converse suffered the loss of an eye two years later in a fight with renegade Indians in Arizona and was eventually placed on the retired list because of his disability.

He came to Ohio State University several times as of cadets, and, during nearly two decades, saw the department grow from an enrollment of 400 to nearly 3000.

With the outbreak of World War I, recalled to active duty, Col. Converse served two years as state consultant officer for officers' training camps, in addition to his university work. In 1918, he was appointed inspector for the sixth district of student army training units, and, later, became recruiting officer at Indianapolis. He was again retired in 1920, with the rank of colonel.

With the late Pres. William Oxley Thompson, the late Gen. Edward Orton and Ralph D. Men- shen, New York City engineer, Col. Converse urged inclusion of the entire section dealing with the ROTC in National Defense Act of 1916. All four appeared in Washington in behalf of the bill.

Living quietly in Columbus after his retirement, Col. Converse appeared several times as an honored guest at military functions. In 1928, he reviewed Ohio State University's ROTC unit, then one of the largest in the country, on Armistice Day, and was marshal of the Columbus parade on the same date two years later. He received a special citation for his ROTC work at the June commencement in 1942.

Col. Converse's daughter-in-law, Mrs. George L. Converse, Jr., of Columbus, was with him at the time of his death.

Also surviving are another daughter-in-law, Mrs. Alexander J. Converse of Worthington; a brother, Howard P. Converse; Auburndale, Mass.; four grandchildren, Lt. Col. George L. Converse IV, now in China; Lt. Col. Winman Converse, San Antonio, Tex.; Stanley Converse of the Neil Av address and Mrs. Alice Carroll Cross of Minerva, Ohio, and two great grandchildren.

The body will be brought to Columbus for funeral services and burial.
Col. G. L. Converse, Former Military Chief at OSU, Dies

Succumbs in Hospital in California After Month's Illness

Col. George L. Converse, commandant and head of the Military Science Department at Ohio State University for almost 10 years, died in a Santa Barbara, Calif., hospital Saturday.

Col. Converse was one of the four men who conceived the ROTC which graduated more than 100,000 Army officers. He was a veteran of the Indian wars during which he lost the sight of an eye.

Funeral services will be held in Columbus. The body will be brought here from Santa Ana. Arrangements were incomplete early today.

Col. Converse would have been 89 years old on Dec. 9. He had been ill since Oct. 6, three days after he left Columbus for his annual winter visit in California. His daughter-in-law, Mrs. George L. Converse Jr. of Columbus was with him at the time of his death.

West Point Graduate

Col. Converse, who lived at 1463 Neil-av, was graduated from West Point in 1880. He was appointed from Columbus and was one of the oldest West Point graduates.

Col. Converse was retired from active duty with the rank of captain in 1894. In 1900 he became first commander of the ROTC at Ohio State University. He remained in that command until 1918 when he was placed in charge of selecting material for officer training camps in Ohio, Indiana, West Virginia and Kentucky.

He was one of the four men who had been chiefly responsible for the ROTC. Col. Ralph D. Morison, New York City, the late Dr. W. O. Thompson and the late Gen. Edward Surton besieged Congress until the bill was passed in 1916.

Col. Converse's son, the late Maj. George L. Converse, followed in his military footsteps. He died last July. Another son, Alexander Converse, died 10 years ago.

Brother Survives

Col. Converse leaves a second daughter-in-law, Mrs. Alexander J. Converse, of Worthington; a brother, Howard P. Converse, Auburndale, Mass.; four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. The grandchildren are: Lt. Col. George L. Converse IV, now in China; Lt. Col. William Converse, San Antonio, Tex.; a nephew, Stanley P. Converse, Worthington, and a niece, Mrs. Ralph Cross, Minerva, O. Arrangements for services and burial are being completed on the west coast.
Colonel Converse Dead

Col. George L. Converse, 89, head of the Department of Military Science and Tactics for 18 years and Ohio State's famous "Conway" of student cadet days in the '90's, is dead. Death came at Santa Barbara, Calif., Nov. 16, after a month's illness. He was 89.

One of the most colorful figures at the University's early history, the stories about the student cadet days under this strict old disciplinarian are legendary among our older graduates. Invariably they remember him as "Conway," abbreviation for his title, Commandant.

Graduating from West Point in '80, Colonel Converse suffered the loss of his right eye two years later in a fight with renegade Indians in Arizona. He came back to Ohio State, where he had studied before going to West Point, in '99 as Commandant of Cadets and was recalled to active duty when World War I broke out. For the next two years he was examining officer for Ohio for officers' training camps in addition to his work at the University. He later served as an inspector of student units and as recruiting officer, being retired in '20.

The University honored Colonel Converse with a special citation, delivered at the June commencement in '42, as a "soldier, commandant and patriot." He was one of four men—all Ohio Staters—who were responsible for the inclusion in the '16 National Defense Act of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps provisions. The citation read: "Through your vision and effort and that of your co-workers, Ralph L. Mershon, the late Gen. Edward Otten, Jr., and the late Dr. William Oxley Thompson, the national defense act incorporated the Ohio Plan for Reserve Officers. The men who produced that plan were men of the Ohio State University."

Retired with the rank of Colonel, "Conway" lived quietly in Columbus, spending a portion of each winter in California. He was honored guest at numerous military functions, in '28 reviewing the Ohio State ROTC, and on Armistice Day in '32, serving as marshal of the Columbus parade.

Col. Converse's daughter-in-law, Mrs. George L. Converse, Jr., of Columbus, was with him at the time of his death. Other immediate survivors include a brother. His son, Maj. George L. Converse, Jr., 1904, died last June 20.
Except for President William Oxley Thompson, no man of his time made a greater impact upon men students at Ohio State than Col. George L. Converse, Jr. between 1899 and 1918. He was professor of military science and tactics in those years. Called out of retirement for special Army duty, he returned to Columbus after World War I and lived out his years in the shadow of the University. He spent his winters in California where he died November 16, 1946. He was 89.

The colonel was spare and straight as a ramrod. He came to the University in 1899 as commandant of cadets. But the campus was not new to him since he had been enrolled as a freshman in 1874 at the age of 17. He stayed, however, only one term. He then got a West Point appointment and was graduated with the class of 1880. His stay there overlapped that of the future Gen. John J. Pershing. It was said that Converse entered West Point the same year Pershing did but was forced to drop out later for a year because of typhoid fever.

His first appointment after graduation was as second lieutenant with the Third Cavalry. He was promoted to first lieutenant in February, 1884 and to captain in August, 1895. Converse probably owed his appointment to West Point to his father, of the same name, who had been elected as a Democrat to the 46th Congress which convened in 1879. The senior Converse was elected to three successive terms in Congress, ending in 1885.

The younger Converse was not so fortunate in an early assignment. He was sent to what was then the frontier territory of Arizona. Before long he was engaged in the Indian fighting that was still going on. In 1882 he lost his left eye to a bullet which was never extracted. For the remainder of his life Col. Converse wore a black patch over that eye. During his years as commandant on the campus it was said, however, that he could see farther and better with his one good eye than most men could with
two good ones.

Loss of his eye, as it turned out, did not end Converse's active military duty. He served in the Spanish-American war and in World War I. In the former he was captain of Company G, 1st Ohio Cavalry from May 11, 1898 and was discharged October 22 of that year. In World War I in the Summer of 1917 he was the line officer with a team examining applicants for the second Officers Training Camp at Ft. Benjamin Harrison, Ind. In November, 1918, he was relieved of his campus duties and was named inspector for the 6th District, S.A.T.C. and was with the headquarters in Columbus in the fore part of 1919. Then he was made chief enlistment officer for Northern Indiana from June to November, 1919. He was promoted to major (ret.) in 1916 and to colonel in 1919.

Converse was one of the Ohio State foursome responsible for the passage in 1916 of the law creating the R.O.T.C. The others were Edward Orton, Jr., (q.v.) Ralph D. Mershon and President Thompson (q.v.). The measure was passed as an amendment to the 1916 National Defense Act. The four lobbied before Congress, with Dr. Thompson doing most of the advocacy and with Mershon supplying the necessary funds for printing and other expenses.

Behind his back, Converse was known as "Commy." In those days the military department was directly under President Thompson. A recurring event then was the annual prize drill and Federal inspection. There was also a sham battle, starting at the north end of the football practice field south of Woodruff Ave. On one such occasion, in 1911, the "battle" was over, and the "troops" had reformed while the prizes were being given. One cadet, a regular player on two Varsity athletic teams, found himself with a blank cartridge left. Unable to resist temptation, he fired his rifle. "Commy" tracked down the culprit. His punishment, as recommended by Converse and approved by President Thompson, was to drill for two more years. The irony of it was that had he not squeezed the trigger, he would have been through with "drill" for good.
At the June, 1942 commencement, Col. Converse and Mershon received special University citations. That to Converse saluted him as a "soldier, commandant and patriot." "Through your vision and effort," it read, "and that of your conferees, Ralph D. Mershon, the late Gen. Edward Orton, Jr., and the late Dr. William Oxley Thompson, the national defense act incorporated the 'Ohio Plan for Reserve Officers.' The men who produced the plan were men of the Ohio State University."

In his later years, Col. Converse was an honored guest at various military functions. In 1928 he reviewed the campus R.O.T.C. Four years later he was grand marshal of the Columbus Armistice Day parade.

In August, 1918 Mrs. Converse was appointed acting dean of women. She served for a year between the departure of Dean Carolyn Breyfogle as of August 1 and the arrival of the new dean, Elisabeth Conrad, as of August 1, 1919. Mrs. Converse was well liked as acting dean. As commandant her husband by precept and example - strict but fair - left his imprint upon the campus generations of his time.
The President now reported to the Board the death of Colonel George L. Converse and, in accordance with the recommendation of the Board of Trustees, has furnished to the family of the deceased a copy of the resolution expressing, on behalf of the University, the sorrows and sympathy of the Board.

The Board of Trustees learns with regret of the death on November 16 of Colonel George L. Converse. While Colonel Converse was no longer connected with the University in any way, his many contributions to University life lead the Board to take special note of his passing. George L. Converse was a student in The Ohio State University during the first decade of its existence. From here he went to West Point where he graduated in 1880 and began a career of active military service. Colonel Converse returned to Ohio State in 1900 as Commandant of Cadets, and served the University for the next twenty years, except for a period when he was examining officer for officer training camps in World War I. During his long service as Commandant, he was prominent figure in University life, and was one of the main forces in bringing about the establishment of the Reserve Officers Training Corps. The wisdom of the establishment of this Corps was amply demonstrated by the performance of the R. O. T. C. officers in World War II. Thousands of friends and former students will mourn the passing of "Commy" as he was commonly known in the early cadet days.

The Board of Trustees desires to express its deep sympathy and its sense of understanding in his loss. It is directed that this resolution be inscribed upon the minutes of the Board.
The soldier pictured above was a West Point Military Academy graduate and a veteran of the Spanish-American War and World War I. He lost the sight in his right eye when shot while fighting Apache-Indians in Arizona in 1882, just two years after graduating from West Point. The bullet was never removed and he wore a black patch over the eye for the rest of his life.

A native Columbusite, he was born here on Dec 9, 1857. He attended OSU in 1874 for one term as a Freshman, but received his appointment to West Point in 1875. He came to OSU in 1900 as commandant of the Military Science & Tactics Department. In 1918, he was promoted to Colonel from Major and appointed by the War Department as regional inspector of the Student Army Training Corps during World War I. He retired from active duty in 1920. While at OSU, he taught military tactics and "... his Thursday morning talks to Freshman men were as much a part of University life as were the Wednesday convocations... of President Thompson." (Archives Bio. File). He was one of four OSU men, Pres. Thompson, Gen. Edward Orton, Jr., and Ralph Mershon being the others, responsible for including the Reserve Officer Training Corps in the National Defense Act of 1916.

His wife, Effie, was acting Dean of Women for one year from 1918-1919. Their two sons also served in the military. The Colonel died Nov 16, 1946 while on his annual visit to California.

The above photo and information were used for a bulletin board display in the Main Library, Autumn Quarter, 1991.