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Ohio State Engineer

Title: Engineers for the Army

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Issue Date: 1942-12

Publisher: Ohio State University, College of Engineering

Citation: Ohio State Engineer, vol. 26, no. 2 (December, 1942), 14-15.

URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/35897>

ENGINEERS FOR THE ARMY

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Actually every branch of the army requires men of technical training and experience because of the character of modern warfare. As a result our army has a depletion of the supply of these men.

Engineers, taken as a class, because of this type of warfare, seem to make the best type of officer material for all branches; not simply because this is a war of technical superiority we are experiencing, but also because of the fact that the training received inculcates in the engineering student a state of mind which is most useful and desirable in solving the predominating technical problems which an officer can expect to encounter daily.

For these reasons the education received as engineers, and the experience and knowledge gained in the R.O.T.C. Corps of Engineers, accompanied by the officer training most likely to be received at Fort Belvoir, should well qualify a young man for commissioning. It is assumed that the student to be commissioned necessarily possesses the qualifications of a leader and officer, such as honor, health, integrity, courage and discipline.

It must be remembered that there still remains a shortage of engineers in our manufacturing plants as well as in the armed forces. However,

of what value would all the implements of war be without a good staff of leaders? Our men must be not only well equipped, but also well led.

When Hitler invaded Poland in September, 1939, and even a year or so later, it was believed that the number of reserve officers in the Corps of Engineers was overwhelmingly large. By the latter part of 1941 it was very evident that this source would soon be exhausted. The next step was to take officer material from the ranks and train these in Officer Candidate Schools, since it was obvious that sufficient number could not be furnished by our engineering schools. As we suffer from a lack of technically trained men we cannot expect to maintain high standards for admittance at such schools. Consequently, the curriculum is not as technical or mathematical as one might expect. For this reason, the men trained in these schools will not be expected to be called upon for the solution of problems requiring engineering knowledge.

This country, not being an aggressor, must rely on training its army personnel in the very short time which is available after the outbreak of war, as compared with our enemies, where preparing an officer for combat takes many years of training. In the last war, German officers were com-



Construction of ponton bridges is one of the major jobs of the army engineer.

Courtesy Military Engineer

pelled to sign long term contracts to serve their country, some of these pending for a period of sixteen years. Here, on the other hand, we must turn to engineering and technical institutions throughout the country for training our men in the very short time allotted.

The synchronization of an engineering education with the experience of handling men and the knowledge of construction, demolition, map reading, aerial photography, tactics and strategy gained through R.O.T.C. courses is found to be a good solution.

Because of the importance of well trained officers to render superior leadership and the need of engineers in our manufacturing plants all over the country, the least every student can do is to put forth every effort to make the most of this vitally needed education.
