

YC Lent Training Help During World War II

BY ROB NIELSEN
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As Yankton College closed its doors to students in 1984, an already incomplete archive of the college's history became scattered — some of it lost to time altogether. However, research has been revealing some glimpses of the school's contributions to the effort to defeat the Axis powers during World War II.

During the war, Yankton College used its Civilian Pilot Training program, which had been in place since 1939, in conjunction with the United States Navy's "V" training programs to help train future naval aviators.

According to Robert Karolevitz's book "Yankton College: A Continuing Story," the program received its first class of cadets in November of 1942. Here, each class of cadets would spend three months at the college studying as well as receiving instruction in navigation, meteorology and radio code. Cadets would train in Piper Cubs and single-wing Fairchild aircraft, utilizing the former Yankton Airport, which is now the site of the Fox Run Golf Course.

It's hard to quantify the number of cadets that passed through Yankton College. Much of what is known of the program has been pulled together from clippings of the *Press & Dakotan*, the *Yankton Student* (the former college's student newspaper) and old yearbooks.

Yankton College Executive Director Jan Garrity told the *Press & Dakotan* said that a story is starting to come together.

"I think we're piecing the program pretty well together," Garrity said. "There was probably a more complete set (of information) when the school was actually in service. After 1984, there was so much pandemonium after the campus closed, a lot of things did unfortunately get thrown away. But, going through some things (in the archives) as far as what our student newspaper had, what some of our college records hold and what people donate, we can eventually tell a story."

And while the full record of these times has yet to be uncovered, what is available offers an intriguing glimpse at the role the school played in helping the nation through a dark time in the world.

Karolevitz wrote that the cadets were roomed in Look Hall, which they nicknamed "the Ship," and became a major part of helping a campus that was in need of additional students.

In April 1943, citing the Navy's concerns about the lack of a concrete runway at Yankton Airport — among other concerns — the *Press & Dakotan* reported that the Navy would be ending its program at the school. However, South Dakota Sen. Chan Gurney talked the Navy out of ending the move, and improvements to the airport were well under way or complete by the time the summer session of cadets came to campus.

Additionally, cadets were given a voice in the *Yankton Student* with a column titled "Scuttlebutt" which introduced students to individual cadets.

Yankton College was one of hundreds of colleges across the nation contributing to the training of men for the United States



COURTESY PHOTO

One of the groups of cadets who passed through Yankton College on their way to serve as aviators in the United States Navy during World War II. The cadets would spend three months learning navigation, meteorology, radio code and preliminary flight training at the college.

Navy in one of their various V programs. One program, the V-12 program which launched in 1943, involved 131 colleges across the country each taking in hundreds of cadets at a time to teach engineering, naval history and engage their cadets in rigorous physical training. Noted in James G. Schneider's "The Navy V-12 Program: Leadership for a Lifetime," many of these cadets boosted social and sports programs at the colleges to which they were assigned to. In one noteworthy case, Milligan College of Tennessee was able to beat basketball powerhouses University of North Carolina and Duke University on consecutive nights.

Garrity said each piece they do have on the program is special to the college's history. "It means a great deal," she said. "For those who were in the program — chances

are they're deceased or very elderly, but their family members or the next generation might be interested in the historical sense of it. We would certainly like to have this as a historical repository to tell that story or answer their inquiries about their relatives' involvement in the service or the cadet program."

She added there's always the opportunity for those with information or who were involved with the program to contribute to the growing story.

"We're always looking for more information to add to our archives," she said.

Anyone with additional information on the cadet program at Yankton College is encouraged to contact the college's archive at (605) 665-3661.

After The War, The GI Bill Trained Ex-Soldiers For The Future

BY DAVE HOSMER

Four million men served in the military during World War I. This was more than 25 percent of the entire male population between the ages of 18 and 31. More than 204,000 of those men were injured.

Approximately 16 million men and women served in the armed services during World War II. Approximately 675,000 men were injured. Just as with World War I, many of them had their education, livelihood and careers delayed as a result of their service.

Congress and President Roosevelt were acutely aware of how poorly veterans had been treated after World War I. Congress in 1924 had authorized a "bonus" to veterans, but President Coolidge vetoed the bill. The veto was overridden.

The "bonus" was laddered. Only \$50 was immediately payable. The balance was to be paid after 1945. The Great Depression intervened. Congress authorized veterans to borrow up to 50 percent of their entitled benefits, but the economy was so bad that many pressed for immediate benefits. President Hoover refused. Protests ensued. Thirty-two thousand men, the largest to that date, demonstrated in Washington, D.C. in January of 1932. That protest led to the encampment of the "Bonus Army" in Hooverville. At the order of President Hoover, General MacArthur forcefully evicted the veterans.

The G.I. Bill was enacted in June of 1944. Its stated purpose was to assist men transitioning from wartime to peacetime. The benefits could be used to pursue an education or to obtain a loan guaranty for a home, farm or businesses. It also included unemployment benefits — \$20 per week. These worked far better than the World War I bonuses.

Prior to the war, only 30 percent of all teenagers graduated from high school. It jumped to 40 percent by 1940. That same year only 5 percent of the population had completed four years of college. With funds now available, millions flocked to college campuses.

The Monday morning after Bob Titus returned from military service, he went to Yankton College to register for summer school. Even though it was two weeks into the semester he was enrolled. He crowed that teachers were "great to veterans." In June, 1949, he graduated, as a result of GI funds, with a major in history/political science and a teaching degree.

Lloyd Haarberg can attest to the full campuses. After his discharge in August 1946, he enrolled at the University of South Dakota. USD was so overloaded that he only got one-half of the classes he wanted. Many others were in the same situation. He laughed and commented that, "all they did was sit and drink beer at the commissary!" Lloyd didn't enjoy it. As a result, he and his buddy Wayne Rockne [a former Marine] concluded that they would decide on whether to return



AP PHOTO

After the conclusion of World War II, millions of soldiers marched home to resume their lives in an America that had changed greatly while they were gone. The GI Bill helped many of them go to college and build the foundations for new civilian careers.



Knutson



Titus



Ranney



Haarberg



Kerr

based upon the flip of a coin. Flip! They left. He worked for Ole Rockne as a trucker for a several years and then finished his studies (with GI Bill assistance) at YC.

Others who joined the gathering of men at college campuses (all courtesy of the GI Bill) are Don Anderson, who graduated from business school at Nettleton College in Sioux Falls (and was later a co-founder of Kolbergs in Yankton), Ken Henseler, who graduated from Augustana College, Cliff Hicks, who graduated Yankton College, Glenn Grosshuesch, who graduated from Southern State Teacher's College, Bill Kerr, who obtained a design engineering degree from the Case Institute of Technology in Cleveland, Ohio, Verne Hull, who graduated from Grinnell College, and Gene Alexander, who graduated from Iowa State University. Dr. Brooks Ranney returned for additional residency. The GI Bill paid him \$85 per month, which supported his family.

Just how important were these benefits to those men? Go ask Dr. Wayne Knutson, the former dean of the Fine Arts Department at USD. Wayne joined the Merchant Marines in late 1944. His ship — The Westminster — delivered one load of lumber from Oregon to Hawaii, passed through the Panama Canal on its return, and docked at Norfolk, Virginia. Then the War ended. Shortly thereafter an ulcer developed and he left the service. His thoughts turned to college, but he wasn't eligible for GI benefits. He called a friend who had served in Europe. They were feeling sorry for themselves. "Young and drunk, and poets all." Just how much did he want those benefits? He and his buddy enlisted in the Army! His time in the Army is one hell of a story, but that's for another day. After obtaining a discharge in May, 1947,

he enrolled at USD — with GI Bill assistance. He transferred to Augustana College and obtained his degree in 1951.

Jim Abbott ended up at San Francisco after the war. He took a train home in mid-August and awaited further orders. He waited and waited, only receiving letters that requested that he "stay home." Finally, in December, the Army sent him back to California for his discharge. He said he was on the "52-50 Club Rolls." I was confused. He said he received government benefits of \$20 per month until he was trained for a new job. As he described it, he basically goofed around with his buddies.

Quite a few people used their GI funds to start businesses. Cliff Hicks also bought tools for his electric shop. Martin Mazourek purchased seed and machinery and leased farm ground. Elmo Christensen purchased Butt's Grocery (where Larry's Plumbing is currently located). Don Modereger's father-in-law, who owned Boller Printing, wanted Don to go to journalism school. Nope. Don thought he could learn a lot more at Boller. He was right. Don was paid \$80.00 per month for on-the-job-training at Boller.

But more than anything, the GI Bill allowed these men and women, and millions more, to share in the good life. GIs had spending money. Ken Custis saw an opportunity to entertain them and to earn some of that spending money. He and a friend opened a veteran's club. The club provided needed fun, and many unmentionable stories, but it also provided an opportunity for Ken to meet his future wife. They were married on Groundhog Day, 1947, and they have been re-living that wonderful day ever since.

Iwo Jima

From Page 4C

laying in black sand. Within seconds he died." A tear was in his eye.

On D+10, Donald participated in a prolonged assault upon the infamous Hill 362A. "That's when we lost our battalion." He and Cpl. Clyde Shivers used shape charges and a five-gallon can of gasoline to blast out a cave and then collapse it. It took a great deal of courage to do that. But not everything was violent.

Donald has a wonderful voice, even today. His inspiration was Bing Crosby. While in a shell hole with two other guys, with the Japs no more than 200 feet away, one of his friends said, "Hey, Graves, give us a song." The Japs would attack at night, which presented different fears. "What do you want to hear?" "Anything." So, he sang the Lord's Prayer as loud as he could. A Jap replied, "That's very good Marine. You sing again."

At approximately the same time on D+10 across the Island to the east, there was another battle raging. Iwo held three airstrips. The 3rd Marines had staked a position on the north side of Airfield #2. On March 1st, Gerald's regiment reached the south side of Airfield #3. According to a letter from Gerald's friend, on March 2nd, they dug a foxhole near that Airfield. The next morning his battalion advanced to the high ground to take the remainder of the Airfield and to head northeast. Gerald didn't make it. Somewhere his mother cried.

Gerald didn't get to see the fruits of his labor. The next day, D+13, a B-29, the Dinah Might made a rocky, emergency landing. Jack recalls that the crew kissed the ground to demonstrate their happiness!

Corp. Drier's regiment had moved north toward Airfield #2. They proceeded to circle around to the east toward Tachiiwa Point. Between the 5th & 9th, the 1st and 3rd battalions had completely encircled the Japanese on the infamous Turkey Knob. There was no let up on the 9th as they crawled another 300 yards. Two advancing men moved ahead too fast. Drier crawled in front of the lines to rescue them. In close proximity to the enemy, he threw hand grenades. That allowed the two men to withdraw. On the 10th, the 25th replaced the 24th in the line, but Eugene did not join them. Somewhere his Mother cried.

Bloody Gulch —that's

where the Japanese made their last stand. "We held them down right there."

According to Donald, "We were in a ravine. My squad was gone; there were three of us." Over the radio came a request. "We are sending a young man out to help you." "Bring him. We need him." "He will be there in about five minutes so don't shoot him." Sure enough, the kid, who happened to be from Kentucky, crawled over and rolled into the hole. "I'm your replacement." "Just sit down over here. We're not going to do anything." Another command came, "Have you got glasses? Look and see if you can spot any snipers out in front of you. We're getting hit." Neither Donald nor Lovinsky saw anything. The kid wanted to take a look. "No. You'll get yourself killed." But Lovinsky said give him the glasses. They were talking and the kid was up there looking. A shot rang out. "His helmet fell back, and he got shot right between the eyes." He fell back and when his helmet fell back there was a picture of his wife and two children in the top of it. "I jumped up and I threw my rifle on the ground. I cursed and I cursed the Marine Corps. I cursed God. I cursed everything. I was out of my mind, and Lovinsky got up and smacked me one. Pulled me down on the ground. I started laughing. I thought it was funny. That stuff goes on."

Donald, Jack and their dog-tired buddies climbed aboard a ship on March 31, 1945 and headed back to Hawaii. The next day, the Battle of Okinawa began. On the way to Hawaii, word came that President Roosevelt had died. "They blew the whistle and said, 'All hands listen. The Old Man is dead.'" Dead silence. There were tears in many eyes. "Our Commander in Chief was dead. What are we going to do?" At that moment, the Iwo Jima veterans knew that the invasion of Japan lay ahead of them.

When Donald arrived back at Hawaii he ran into Ira Hayes (a flag raiser), who had returned from the War Bond tour. "You had it made! What are you back here for?" Ira replied, "It was a bunch of bull. I couldn't handle it. It wasn't true. I never even saw a Jap on Iwo. They were making heroes out of us. I'm not a hero." I know that veterans don't like that word — "hero" — but Donald, Jack, Eugene and Gerald, you are courageous men who deserve our thanks. I won't forget what you did for me and for our Country. *Semper fi*, gentlemen, *semper fi!*



Richard Wintz, Captain,
2nd Ranger Battalion
US Army 1942-1945

Founder of Wintz Funeral Home in 1947

*"For those who have served,
life has a flavor the protected will never know."*

We remember the contributions of the men and women who fought for freedom in our armed forces.

To those who are still with us we offer our deep thanks. For those who are gone, their spirits live on in the hearts of those for whom they fought.



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