



**Class Narrative Class 2-68 E2
21 July 1967 – 18 January 1968
U.S. Army Armor School OCS**



The fourth and last Company E2 class and last Company E class to start and finish OCS at Fort Knox was Class 2-68. It was the 38th Armor branch specific class and the 50th class of 53 classes that completed their officer candidate training at Fort Knox during the Vietnam War Era. On Friday, 21 July 1967 110 Basic Officer Candidates, all volunteers for the U.S. Army's Armor Officer Candidate Course, began their challenging journey in the quest to earn their Armor School diploma and pin gold bars on their shoulders signifying them as Second Lieutenants. During the training cycle five candidates from three other classes would be cycled into the class. One came from Class 28-67, F1; one from Class 30-67, D1; and three came from Class 31-67, C2. Two of the five would graduate with Class 2-68. Also during the training cycle one candidate would be recycled to Class 3-68, F2 and one would be recycled to the last OCS class. Class 5-68, B2. Both candidates graduated with those classes. The class average was 85.71. Thirty-eight members of the class would either quit or be relieved from the course. On Thursday, 18 January 1967 seventy-five Senior Officer Candidates would achieve their goal of becoming commissioned officers in the United States Army.

The 18 January 1967 graduation ceremony was held in the auditorium of Gaffey Hall with COL Robert E. Hayes, commander of the 3rd Training Brigade, USATCA as the guest speaker. He told the graduates that "Challenges have never been more demanding, and never has there been a brighter opportunity". 2LT James H. Shields, III made the class response. It was announced that Charles M. Sambol was the winner of the Military Stakes Course by earning an impressive 921 of the 1000 points possible. The Distinguished Honor Graduate was Edward B. Krekeler, Jr. The Honor Graduate was Robert McNally and the Distinguished Military Graduates were John C. Russell, John A. Gibson, Gary W. Faith, Michael L. Sells, James L. Gladney and Charles S. Johnson, III.

Thirteen of the graduating class would attend the Army's Officer Rotary Wing Aviator's Course. 1LT Curtis P. Challberg was the only member of 2-68 killed in Vietnam. He was killed when a sling-loader Air Force O-1E pitched nose high into the aft rotor of Challberg's CH-47C Chinook while the Chinook was doing a slight left turn causing the Chinook to crash. Thirteen other members of the class have died since their military service and are filing their canteens at Fiddler's Green. Thirty-seven members of the class have been located thanks to their classmates Kenneth Gunton and Charles Stutzman.

The story of one of the candidates who did not complete the course is a good example of group harassment, hazing or mind games that go wrong and have real life consequences for the captive participant. At the end of the third week of the cycle he was injured in a barracks accident during a surprise "Switch the Floor" exercise that two Tac Officers pulled on their platoons right after dinner. During the exercise he and another candidate were carrying a wall locker down the stairs from the third floor to the second floor. Going backwards going first down the stairs carrying the top of the locker the other candidate lost his footing and dropped the end he was carrying forcing the other candidate down the stairs with the total weight of the locker. He hit his back on the protruding wood trim on the stairway wall resulting in a severe sprain to the L4 disc. It was later determined that the disc had been fractured. He was treated at Ireland Army Hospital, placed on limited duty for thirty days with no running, PT or lifting until cleared by a doctor. Because of the continued pain and loss of training time he decided to drop out of the OC course in early September 1967. He had entered OCS as a Specialist Four with an MOS of 34D20 – Automatic Data Process Repair (ADP Repair). After leaving OCS he returned to the Signal Corps branch staying a total of twelve years and was discharged in February 1977.



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with the rank of SFC-E7. He earned a bachelor's degree in Telecommunications and Business Administration, also a Master in Business Administration and worked for Martin Marietta Corporation, and Air Products and Chemicals where he ran their worldwide computer and networking organization. He retired in 2017 and in 2018 found a neurosurgeon that specialized in advanced spine care. In April 2018, being at a point of being unable to walk or stand, he had back surgery and is now without any lower back pain.

11 January 2018