



A female cadet receives her warrant.
Photo courtesy of Union College Heritage Collection.

Medical Cadet Corps

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The Seventh-day Adventist Medical Cadet Corps (MCC) is a program of the General Conference originally intended to prepare church members for noncombatant military service in the event of compulsory enlistment. Its beginning is often dated from the first meeting of the Union College Medical Corps on January 8, 1934 in Lincoln, Nebraska. However, the program at Union College is one of several antecedents to the MCC, which was not adopted and unified under General Conference direction until 1939.

Origin

Conscription during the American Civil War was one of the first issues that the newly-organized Seventh-day Adventist Church faced in 1863. Initially, Adventists utilized the commutation fee provision of the conscription law, whereby those drafted could pay \$300 in lieu of induction into the army. When the law was revised in 1864 to restrict

this provision to members of recognized pacifist churches, Adventist leaders quickly and successfully sought recognition for the denomination's conscientious objector status. At that time, the church's foundational principle was established: Adventists were encouraged not to voluntarily enlist, but when drafted seek noncombatant service. However, the position declared by church leadership did not mean uniformity of practice among the membership!¹ It is estimated that about 200 Adventists served in the Union Army during the Civil War²

World War I was the first armed conflict to involve a large number of Seventh-day Adventists. In the United States, conscription law allowed for conscientious objectors (COs), but popular opinion against COs led to harassment, particularly from non-commissioned officers and other soldiers. While members of historic peace churches and socialists were disciplined for refusal to bear arms, Adventists were also punished for refusal to obey orders on Sabbath. The number of Adventists who served in the military during World War I is unknown, but the estimated number of soldiers who were court-martialed ranges from 162 to 186³ and even more were disciplined. In 1936, Francis Wilcox McClellan reported that thirty-five Adventists were serving sentences in the United States Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas at the end of 1918.⁴ However, a Mennonite minister, Jacob D. Miniger, who was a frequent visitor to the COs at Leavenworth and a careful observer of their experience, recorded only fourteen Adventists in his personal records.⁵ Further research is needed in order to reconcile this discrepancy.

The General Conference did not leave Adventist soldiers completely unsupported, but its support was reactive rather than proactive. By the time that support became sufficiently organized to make a significant difference, the war was coming to an end. Several programs investigated or initiated during World War I also played important roles in the later development and administration of the MCC. The War Service Commission, established in the summer of 1918, coordinated outreach to Adventist soldiers through the distribution of literature, camp pastor visitations, and government advocacy. In the autumn of 1918 the Institute for War-Time Nursing opened with a mission to train Adventist soldiers for humanitarian service, but the war ended before the completion of the first term. More controversial was the request from the College of Medical Evangelists (now Loma Linda University) to host a Student Army Training Corps (SATC)—a program of the United States Army under which students could continue their college studies while training for the army. The SATC was considered by the GC, but rejected because in order to participate, students had to volunteer for the program (and, by implication, for military service) and the United States government would not guarantee participants noncombatant positions when they later joined the army.⁶

In the post-World War I years the publication of veterans' stories made apparent the need for a better response to war in the future. A group of Adventist World War I veterans met in Denver, Colorado in the late 1920s to discuss what might be done. Students at Walla Walla College formalized their concerns in 1930 in a letter sent to the General Conference Committee, but it barely created a ripple. At Emmanuel Missionary College (now Andrews University) in 1927-1928 Lewis S. Williams made a more concerted effort to introduce practical military training to Adventist students. Williams created a physical education course that included elements of military basic training, but Williams's ideas were deemed too militaristic and the class was discontinued after one year.⁷

Everett N. Dick and other World War I veterans on the faculty at Union College were aware of these prior efforts when, in the autumn of 1933, they proposed that the GC create a pre-induction training program to prepare young Adventist men for military service. One member, Alvin Walter Johnson, had even volunteered in the Student Army Training Corps at the University of Minnesota. Their proposal was presented to the GC Young People's Missionary Volunteer (MV) department leaders by college president, Milian L. Andreasen, at the Autumn Council in Battle Creek. As with the letter from Walla Walla College students three years earlier, the response was neutral. But Andreasen liked the idea. Upon his return to Union College in late October, the concept was presented to the entire college faculty who voted to form a committee to further investigate how such a program should be designed and implemented.⁸

The Union College Medical Corps Committee members included Everett N. Dick, chairman, Frank H. Yost, Guy W. Habenicht, Guy C. Jorgensen, and Alvin W. Johnson. One of the first steps taken by the committee was to consult with the senior medical training officer of the Nebraska Army National Guard, Major Emil Burgher. At Burgher's suggestion, a curriculum combining elements of military basic training and battlefield first aid was created. This set a precedent for consulting with the Army Medical Corps on a regular basis to ensure that the MCC curriculum stayed consistent with army needs.⁹

The Union College Medical Corps proved popular with Union College students. Other Adventist college campuses quickly took note and Washington Missionary College under Willard P. McNeill's leadership began its own medical corps similar to that of Union College. Meanwhile, on the west coast at White Memorial Hospital, Dr. Cyril Courville, a major in the Army Reserves, was assigned to the 47th General Hospital—an Army Reserve unit sponsored by the White Memorial Hospital. Courville soon expanded his training program to include military training for college and academy students in the Pacific Union. Courville's program differed from the Union College Medical Corps in that it was affiliated with an official Army Reserve hospital.¹⁰

Organization

By the time of the Autumn Council in 1939, hostilities had begun in Europe and Asia. The popularity of the medical corps programs at Union College, the College of Medical Evangelists, and Washington Missionary College created a de facto framework on which the GC could easily establish a national program. As a result, the Medical Cadet Corps Council (MCC Council) was created in 1939, and a name and curriculum were adopted. The curriculum, which included military, medical, and moral instruction, remained very similar to that of Union College and Washington

Missionary College and modeled military protocol, including a system of rank and officer commissions. Rank and commission were internal to the MCC program and carried no recognition in the army. The official name, Seventh-day Adventist Medical Cadet Corps, reflected the influence of the program from the College of Medical Evangelists, but raised hackles among protocol perfectionists. Strictly speaking, only trainees preparing to become officers should be called cadets—appropriate for CME medical students. But the primary purpose of the MCC was to train enlisted soldiers, so the title was a misuse of the word *cadet*. Regardless, the name stuck.¹¹

As with the War Service Commission, a thorough study of the MCC Council in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* and the GC Minutes reveals a convoluted story of committee structuring, naming, restructuring, and renaming over three decades. Despite numerous changes, at heart MCC administration remained multilevel and cross-departmental. At the top, the War Service Commission took leadership in setting policy, coordinating schedules for national camps, and funding salary and travel for the national directors of MCC training. The War Service Commission worked closely with the MV Department to recruit cadets. At the union and local conference levels, War Service and MV secretaries were often the same individuals. However, the bulk of responsibility rested with academies and colleges who provided and financed instructors for MCC courses (usually offered for physical education credit) and training camps.¹²

During World War II the General Conference initially divided responsibility for MCC training and promotion among Floyd G. Ashbaugh in the Pacific and North Pacific Unions, Everett N. Dick in the Northern, Central, Southwestern, and Lake Unions, and Chris P. Sorensen in the East Coast unions. Of the three, Dick was the only one whose attention was not divided by other responsibilities. In March of 1941, he was made the sole director of training across the nation. When the MCC was reactivated in 1950, Dick continued as director of training, holding this position until 1958 when he was replaced by one of his protégés, Clark Smith. Smith remained in this role until the final national training camp was held in 1971.¹³

History

During the 1940s, the individual MCC courses on each American college and academy campus were the core components of the program. It was the task of the regional directors to train teachers and help them set up MCC units on their campuses. While the goal was the same across campuses and conferences, in practice there was a great deal of variation in instruction, training manuals, and local traditions. In regions where there was enough interest, a few Women's Medical Cadette Corps were established. Each campus also adopted its own uniform—none of them khaki as this cloth was restricted for army use during the war.¹⁴ A common insignia was adopted for use by all MCC units. It consisted of a round white patch with a caduceus and the letters "SDA MCC" embroidered in maroon.

In October of 1940, fourteen months before the United States entered World War II, the Lake Union Conference invited Everett Dick to direct a two-week MCC camp at Grand Ledge, Michigan where 230 cadets trained. Each Sunday of the camp an additional 330 trainees from all over the Lake Union arrived for a day of drilling. These Sunday drills were the largest MCC events ever held. This camp also foreshadowed the popular Camp Doss of the 1950s that would be held in the same location.¹⁵

In early 1941, with the aid of the War Service Commission, Dick sought an opportunity for military training in one of the Army's civilian programs. In the autumn of 1941 Everett N. Dick, Orason L. Brinker, Chris P. Sorensen, and Cyril B. Courville were invited to attend the first Civilian Orientation Course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas held November 10-December 6, 1941. The course was "designed to give the civilian students an appreciation of the missions and roles of the Army, the organization and capabilities of Army forces, the functioning of the [general] staff sections, logistics and supply considerations, security measures, and mobilization problems." Most invitees were prominent businessmen expected to negotiate army contracts during the war.¹⁶

Following the end of World War II a few campuses kept the MCC active without GC sanction or supervision. Reactivating the MCC was proposed as early as March 1948, but no action was taken until 1950 when the prospect of American intervention in Korea led Carlyle B. Haynes, secretary of the War Service Commission, to recommend a revival of the MCC.¹⁷

The MCC of the 1950s and 1960s was very different from that of the 1930s and 1940s. Whereas the MCC had previously been comprised of many locally organized MCC units loosely affiliated across the United States, the revived MCC was an international professionally administered, standardized, and unified training program. Everett Dick became the sole director of training with the MCC rank of colonel. The new standardization was introduced at the first national training camp—Camp Carlyle B. Haynes, named in honor of the War Service Commission secretary—held at a former Works Progress Administration project site in Beulah, Colorado presently named Pueblo Mountain Park. This camp was intended to prepare MCC instructors, and those who passed the training were issued MCC officer commissions. Other innovations included a single training manual and a standard uniform to be adopted by every MCC unit in the United States. The 1950s also saw the MCC take on an additional mission of preparing cadets to take leading roles in local community civil defense drills.¹⁸

These changes were significant. With the GC's vote on July 10, 1950, all prior officer commissions—a requirement for teaching MCC courses—were revoked. Anyone wishing to teach MCC courses needed to take the revised training at an annual national camp. The common uniform made the MCC publicly recognizable and facilitated regularity at the national camps. The new training manual was validated by the Office of the Surgeon General Department of the Army, ensuring that it was current and that the training received by cadets met the standards of the U.S. Army Medical Corps. Finally, because all officers/instructors were required to receive training at the national summer camp

programs, inconsistencies in training were eliminated. This requirement also ensured that the annual camps became the core of the MCC program.¹⁹

Camp Haynes in Colorado was held only once. In 1951, the national camp was named after Desmond T. Doss and held on the Michigan Conference camp meeting grounds in Grand Ledge, Michigan. In 1952, the NAD recommended to the Autumn Council that annual camps be held in the United States and Canada for as long as the military situation demanded, thus making Camp Doss an annual event. Camp Doss was held every year from 1951 to 1963 on the Michigan Conference camp meeting grounds at Grand Ledge, Michigan, except for 1962 when Camp Doss was held at Gladstone, Oregon. Although the national MCC training camps continued until 1971, the mid-1960s saw declining interest in the MCC. In 1964 and 1969 Camp Doss was canceled for lack of sufficient registrations, and no camp was advertised in 1965. When held, the national camp during these final years alternated between Grand Ledge, Michigan and west coast locations in either Gladstone, Oregon or Soquel, California.²⁰

Each national camp followed a predictable pattern. They were held in the summer and scheduled for ten-fourteen days. Training was divided into two tracks, one for officers who would then become instructors, and one for cadets destined for induction into the United States Army Medical Corps. The camp culminated in a grand review during which senior officers from the Office of the Surgeon General Department of the Army inspected the cadets. Conference leaders, government officials, members of the press, and the general public were also invited. Desmond Doss, the Adventist war hero and Congressional Medal of Honor recipient after whom the camp was named, was also often a guest.²¹

In 1951 the GC appropriated \$1,000 for MCC camps in Europe.²² Although it appears a camp was never held there, the MCC was very strong in other regions of the world. Canada held its first MCC training camp in February of 1951. By late 1952, there was strong interest from East Asia. Consequently, Dick spent the first four months of 1953 visiting Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines. He made additional visits to East Asia in 1955 and 1957 with an itinerary expanded to include Hong Kong, Singapore, and Indonesia. The MCC was also successful in the Inter-American and South American Divisions, as well as parts of the Middle East.²³

By the late 1950s the MCC had passed its zenith. In addition to the national Camp Doss held most years, union conference camps remained active into the 1960s. However, though academy and college campuses still listed the MCC in their catalogs and bulletins, few if any were teaching the course. In some ways the MCC was a victim of its own success. After World War II and the Korean conflict, Adventists were widely recognized and respected for both their noncombatancy and their medical service. The army was regularly placing Adventists in the Medical Corps whether or not they confirmed MCC training, making Adventists consider the MCC less important. Growing disillusionment with the war in Vietnam among Americans and a revived pacifist movement within the Adventist Church also contributed to the declining popularity of the MCC.²⁴

No official action was ever taken to close the MCC program. In 1973 the MCC Committee was still standing when Theodore Carcich replaced W. J. Hackett as chairman. However, with the end of the draft in the United States that same year, the program apparently ceased. However, the MCC remained active as a local program in several regions of the world including the Philippines and Puerto Rico. In the latter, it remained active as of 2018 in affiliation with Adventist Community Services.

In 1994 the Youth Ministries Department proposed the creation of an Adventist Youth Service Corps Board that, among other members, should include an MCC representative, noting that the MCC was important in locations where there were significant numbers of immigrants from countries where the MCC was active. On the east coast of the United States local congregations made up of immigrants from Puerto Rico had kept the name alive. As of 2018, the Adventist Chaplaincy Ministry was working to revive the MCC as a tool for preparing Adventists for military service.²⁵

Role and Place in the World Church and Its Mission

The MCC played an important role during a difficult and unique time in history, allowing Seventh-day Adventists to serve their respective home countries with honor by offering life-saving humanitarian aid in compliance with Christian principles. For the first time, the General Conference became proactive instead of reactive in protecting the interests of its conscientious-objector members. The claim has been made that fewer Adventists suffered court-martial during World War II than during World War I. While this is entirely probable, it is a difficult claim to prove, given the restrictions on research in the court martial records in the United States National Records and Archives Administration. Likewise, the number of Adventists who benefited from MCC training and who served in the armed forces is unknown, but can be conservatively estimated in the tens of thousands.²⁶

Lists

Official Name: Seventh-day Adventist Medical Cadet Corps (1939-)

Directors of Cadet Training: E. N. Dick (1940-1941—central United States), C. P. Sorensen (1940-1941—eastern United States), F. L. Ashbaugh (1940-1941—Pacific Union), E. N. Dick (1941-1942; 1951-1958), no GC-appointed director (1943- 1950), Clark Smith (1958-1973; continued working with the National Service Organization until 1980.

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