

# There's Something About a Soldier

by Blythe Thimsen  
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**T**HE U.S. ARMY had an advertising campaign in the 1970s with the catchphrase "There's something about a soldier!" Maybe it should have been changed to "There's something about a Gonzaga soldier." For 111 years, Gonzaga University has had a proud and strong connection to the military, producing some of the finest soldiers and military men and women around.

It all started back in 1899, when Fr. George de la Motte became president of Gonzaga. He was said to have been, "reared as an 'army brat,' French style. He carried with him to the grave a soldierly bearing and a deep appreciation for the military virtues." according to *Gonzaga University: Seventy-five Years, 1887-1962*, by Wilfred P. Schoenberg, S.J.

One of de la Motte's prefects was a student named James Kennelly, who had attended Gonzaga High School in Washington D.C., which was known for its cadet corps. "It would be difficult to decide which of these two, the president or the prefect, took the initiative in proposing a military at Gonzaga," wrote Schoenberg. Perhaps it was neither one above the other, but their combined interest and passion for the military that inspired Fr. de la Motte to reach out to retired Capt. Gerhard Luhn for a meeting to discuss the potential of offering military discipline and courses for the students.

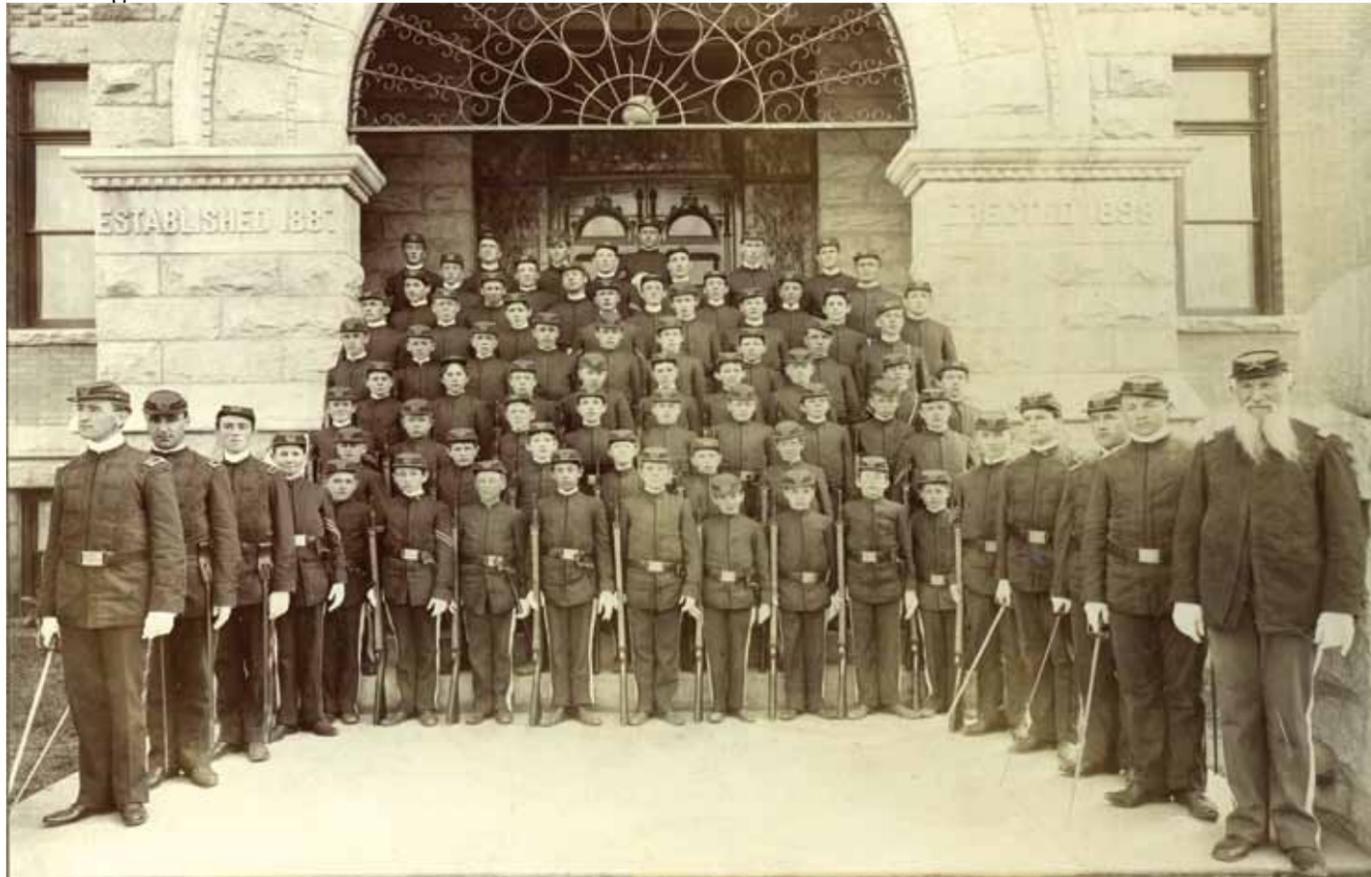
Capt. Luhn and Fr. de la Motte met on November 21, 1899. Luhn, who had been stationed at 40 different army posts throughout his career, was well known by those in the Jesuit community according to Schoenberg. "Captain Luhn was a familiar figure to many Gonzaga Jesuits. With his great white flowing beard, like an Old Testament prophet, he was easily recognized in any congregation from the altar, as well as from the choir loft, and his many



Capt. Luhn leads the cadets in a drill, ca. 1903-1904

1903-1904

No 6



Cadets, 1st year, 1899-1900. Note the young boys in the center, many of whom were too small to lift the guns.

gracious benefactions connecting with Masses on army posts had placed him in the category of a very special friend of the priests.”

It was proposed that Luhn direct a cadet program—an offer he accepted with so much enthusiasm, that he didn't waste any time getting started, enrolling students that very day. “He explained to them the end and aim of the corps and what was to be expected from each member. He then proceeded to enlist or enroll members. There were about 65 who signed their name(s). This was all done with solemnity and ceremony in order to make an impression on the boys. After the enrollment, Capt. Luhn lined them up in the yard and gave some instructions in drilling.” Beginning that day, Luhn was solely responsible for running the program until he resigned, six years later, in 1905.

Both de la Motte and Luhn felt it was important for the corps to be officially recognized by the government, so they filed an application with the United States War Department. The application was accepted and Gonzaga's military department was officially established on January 9, 1900.

There were 80 cadets in two companies, A and B. Guns arrived in mid-May, but some of the cadets were too small to shoulder them. Much to the embarrassment of these young chaps, they were supplied with wooden guns to use during the drill, a fate far more hurtful to their pride than the heavy guns ever could have been to their small shoulders and muscles.

A statement in the Gonzaga end of the year catalogue for 1899-1900 promoted the cadet program, saying, “A cadet corps similar in aim, management and equipment to the military companies existing in many of the best colleges and academics of the country, is an important addition to the list of societies at Gonzaga college.”

“In the casual days before the two great World Wars, the Fathers didn't take military training as a serious commitment...they apparently looked upon it as a kind of disciplinary program for gentleman boys,” wrote Schoenberg. This observation was apparent of Maj. H.E. Tutherly, 11<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, who was sent to inspect the cadets. He wrote a scathing report, dated June 4, 1902, which was sent to the Inspector General:

“The majority of the students are too young to participate in military instruction such as is contemplated to be given under the supervision of an officer detailed by the War Department. I should judge that there were only about 50 students of an age suitable for drill,” he wrote. “While the president and authorities seem very much interested to have these boys drill, take an interest in it, and do the best they can to promote it, I hardly think such exercises should be conducted under Government supervision...While all this (drill) is done with good intention on the part of the authorities, I think it is a military farce, and worse for the service than to have no drill at all. I am therefore compelled to recommend that the officer be relieved from duty here, and the arms turned in. Captain Luhn, the retired officer in charge of the military department, commanded the battalion drill dressed in obsolete uniform – braided blouse and chasseur cap – not in the present form of a captain of Infantry, and his whole uniform was soiled and worn beyond what an officer is suitable to appear in at a ceremony.”

Such harsh words were no doubt unwelcome by Luhn, who, though he had



Comissioned and non-comissioned officers of the cadets, ca. 1903-1904

a passion for the military, did not get much support from the school. He was provided housing, but no pay for his services. Despite multiple requests on his part to be paid for his services, the school denied it, reasoning the government should pay for his services, as he was preparing the young men for service in the military. Though he had a passion for his work, the lack of pay may have contributed to his decision to leave the school, and Spokane, in 1905, and move to St. Louis.

When Luhn left, the school had difficulty finding a replacement, so they picked a recent graduate, named Hugh Winder, who had become a captain in the cadet program. The War Department notified the school it could hire Winder, but the government would no longer officially recognize the program. At a loss of what to do, without another instructor, they hired Winder and lost their official standing and, therefore, financial support of the government. As a result, the government wanted their supplies – guns, uniforms, and etc. returned to them, or purchased. The school stalled for over two years as they tried to raise enough money to pay for their supplies. Then, in the nick

of time, they hired Capt. Edmund Butts, a member of the U.S. Army attached to Fort George Wright, to take of the program. This allowed them to once again be officially recognized by the government, and cancelled their debt.

Capt. Butts' reign did not last long. In 1908, Gonzaga's president, Fr. Goller called for the dissolution of the cadet program, after teachers complained that the amount of drill time required by the War Department interfered with the studies of the students.

An interest in a military program at Gonzaga resurfaced in 1917, a few years after WWI broke out. Young men on campus were eager to enlist in the army, but new Gonzaga president, Fr. Brogan, wanted to keep them in school as long as possible. As a compromise, he persuaded officers from Fort Wright to provide drill instructors who formed a full company that would practice drills, beginning April 23, 1917.

This whet the whistle of those young men who were eager to serve, but it far from satiated their hunger to be a part of the military glory and action. Many young men wanted to contribute

to the war effort, and Gonzaga's campus began hemorrhaging students during the summer of 1917 when, free from school, they decided to enlist.

Other colleges were facing a similar problem, but a potential solution was found in the organization of the Student Army Training Corps (SATC). In a letter from Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, he explained that the SATC “aims to accomplish a two-fold object: first, to develop as a great military asset the large body of young men in colleges; and second, to prevent unnecessary and wasteful depletion of the colleges through indiscriminate volunteering by offering to the students a definite and immediate military status.”

The object of the SATC would allow men between the ages of 18 and 21 to continue their schooling and at the same time, prepare themselves for the nation's service.

An article in the May 21, 1918, *Spokane Chronicle* declared, “U.S. will take over Gonzaga: Gonzaga is to be, in effect, a military school next year under the direction of the government. The students at the university, between the ages of 18



President Harry S. Truman, presents Gonzaga ROTC colors to the unit in May, 1950, at Gonzaga.

and 21 years of age will be given military training by the government. All cadets will have the standing of enlisted men in the United States Army and will be subject to the call of the government at any time.”

“The details of the arrangement are yet to come from Washington D.C.,” said Fr. Reid, who worked on the program. “The change is assured, however. We will have in effect a military post here.”

An article in the July 16, 1918, *Spokane Chronicle* stated that all Gonzaga students 18 and over would spend summer vacation of 1919 at a student army training camp. “The boys enrolled in the student’s army training corps will be enlisted for the duration of the war, with the understanding, however, that they will not be called to active duty until they reach draft age, unless urgent military reasons compel an earlier call.”

The excitement about the SATC program, and the meaning for the school was evident throughout the school and city. Spokane was proud of the Gonzaga students who were embarking on a

military career while at school.

Two days earlier, U.S. Attorney Francis A. Garrecht, was at the school to present a flag with 187 anchors and stars, representing the 187 Gonzaga students who had gone on to serve in the military and said, “Gonzaga has taught her sons how to die well and her prayer is that in the moment of supreme test, none may falter. For while those in doing their bit for their country sacrifice their lives are not martyrs in the strict sense of the term, yet are they martyrs to duty, martyrs to their love of humanity...” (*Spokane Chronicle*, July 14, 1918)

The SATC course of instruction consisted of 53 hours of instruction per week in military science and allied subjects, with the curriculum resembling that of West Point

Schools with any form of drill programs were instructed by the Secretary of War to send representatives to the Presidio, in San Francisco, for training over the summer of 1918. Select students from Gonzaga were sent to receive military training, so

they could serve as military instructors at Gonzaga.

Fr. Brogan went as well, and met with the West Coast college presidents to learn the specifics of the SATC program. Students, age 18 and up, would be inducted on registration and would receive, besides uniforms and equipment, the pay of a private, which was \$30. They, would also receive housing and sustenance, ranging between one and two dollars per day.

While the interest in SATC was bountiful, supplies were not. Beds and bedding for up to 40 students had to be borrowed from Fort George Wright until additional supplies could be delivered by the army.

The September 28, 1918, *Spokane Chronicle* reported, “At 9 a.m. Tuesday morning, simultaneously with 500 similar institutions all across the country, Gonzaga, which volunteered its facilities for a government military school, will be officially sworn into the federal service.” A message from President Woodrow Wilson was read at all of the schools.



Gonzaga's Loyola Guard, ca. 1960-1961.

Less than a month after school began, the SATC faced its first battle, though it was not of the war variety; rather, they were battle the Spanish Flu, which hit Gonzaga and Spokane quite hard. Beginning October 18, 1918, SATC students were forbidden to attend theaters, moving picture shows, and other places of amusement as precaution against the Spanish flu. The school threatened expulsion as a penalty for violation of the rule. Though attempts were made to keep students from contracting the illness, 60 members of Gonzaga's SATC became ill.

The SATC began to feel rumbles of demise when on November 27, 1918 it was reported in the *Spokane Chronicle*, “The SATC at Gonzaga will be demobilized in the very near future according to war department inspectors...The university of Nebraska has received orders from the war department to demobilize their SATC immediately.”

By December 1918 the SATC was disbanded. The war was over, and despite the enthusiasm, the young men had never been able to get the program up and running due to the flu epidemic that had caused them to cancel drills and

instructions.

Military training at Gonzaga would not resurface again for nearly twenty years, but when it did, it was the beginning of a continual presence of military training on campus. In December 1938, President Roosevelt authorized the use of \$100,000 of government funds to train college students as airplane pilots, at the request of the Civil Aeronautic Commission, which was concerned about the lack of pilots, both for military and private transportation purposes. The program was set up to train college students as airplane pilots and flight teachers, and to provide refresher courses for licensed pilots. With war simmering ever stronger, the objective soon transitioned to an emergency defense measure.

Gonzaga president, Fr. Robinson offered Gonzaga's facilities for government use in these military training programs. He wrote to the CAA, expressing a desire for Gonzaga to become a training center for young aviators. “I am deeply interested, and want to do all within my power to make our institution one of the many throughout the United States for the training of 20,000 young flyers next year.

I am confident we can handle the courses required, and that Spokane has skilled aviators for the actual flying instruction.” (*Spokesman Review*, 1941)

Seventy-five men began training July 1, 1942 at Gonzaga. The men were trained as army flying specialists and were housed at Gonzaga at the expense of the army. It wasn't just students who participated; the program was open to men ages 18 to 37 who could pass the CAA mental and physical tests. The classes they took at Gonzaga included meteorology, navigation and civil air regulations, mathematics, physics, military science, drill and physical exercise. Each course lasted two months. Six teachers were added to the Gonzaga staff to teach the extra classes and students.

In March 1942, noticeable numbers of teachers and students had left campus to join the war effort in Europe. Their spaces were quickly filled with new arrivals; with military connections to the land and air, it was no surprise that the sea was next, as witnessed with the arrival of Naval cadets in 1942. Lt. Com. Lyle L. Morris was the commanding officer of the Gonzaga Navy unit. Students took educational courses at Gonzaga, while preparing to join the navy.



Members of the V-5, of the Navy officer-training program at Gonzaga, ca. 1945

The program only lasted for two years, but made quite the impact on the school.

The July 6, 1943 *Spokesman-Review* reported, "At Gonzaga, DeSmet Hall has become a naval station. Each floor is a deck. The hospital is sickbay. Cadets log out to go ashore, which means to go on leave to the city, log in to return aboard, which means returning to the hall... In short, if they had a hammock and an ocean, they might be at sea for all the nautical atmosphere."

On June 6, 1945, Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation slid the United States Victory ship, *Gonzaga Victory*, into the Willamette River. "We are doubly proud to see this great ship go down the ways, bearing the proud name of Gonzaga," said Gonzaga president Francis E. Corkery S.J. "Out there somewhere in her voyaging, this ship will cross the paths of 1,500 of Gonzaga's loyal sons, fighting the battle for freedom."

In its time, 686 men received training in the Navy's V-12 program, and 1,780 men were trained in the civil aeronautics war training serves program, which included the Navy V-5.

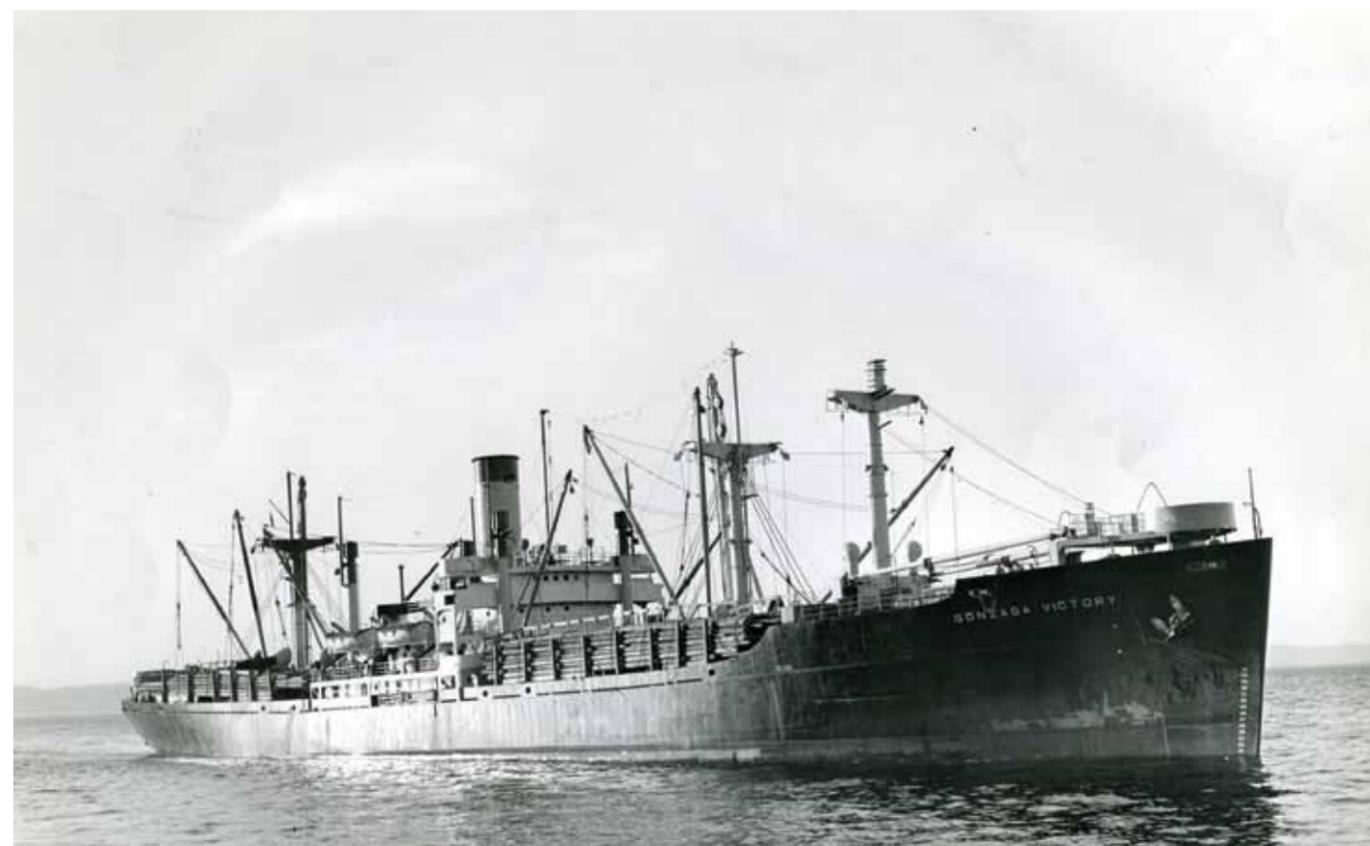
The October 19, 1945 headline in the *Gonzaga Bulletin* declared "It's Anchors Aweigh as Navy Shoves Off; Bluejackets leave Gonzaga campus Monday, October 22." The Navy officer-training unit terminated that week, with the departure from campus of 150 men who spent two years and four months in the program. Seventy of them were V-12 trainees, with remaining men in the V-5 flight-training program. The V-12s reported to the University of Washington's Naval ROTC program on November 1, 1945 and the V-5 trainees reported to UC Berkley."

Wan Seegmiller, a member of the V-12, wrote this in the *Gonzaga Bulletin*. "The Army and Navy, long recognizing the need for capable educated officers, began to give the dwindling schools a transfusion of picked service personnel... Sounds of shouted commands and marching feet resounded over the peaceful campus, men in blue and cadets in tan filled the corridors and classrooms... But sometimes it was difficult to realize it was all part of the war. It seemed a far cry from the business of killing to be studying mathematics and history and English, but the men

who were studying looked forward to a day when this training would furnish the leadership necessary to the winning of the war... The past is a tribute; the present, a reward; the future, a promise. Gonzaga looks at the past with pride; the present with thankfulness; the future with hope. *Semper Fidelis*."

With the pilot training program and the Navy gone, it was time for a new era in Gonzaga's military history. On February 4, 1947, in a letter to the adjunct general, Gonzaga submitted an application for the establishment of an Infantry unit of the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) at Gonzaga.

A return letter arrived from the Headquarters Sixth Army on April 23, 1947, stating that the War Department approved the application for the establishment of an Infantry ROTC unit for the 1947-1948 school year. The agreement, signed by Gonzaga president, Fr. Francis E. Corkery S.J., stated there had to be a minimum of 100 physically fit male students to maintain and ROTC program. Reaching the 100 mark was not a problem, as ROTC was required for all



United States victory ship, *Gonzaga Victory*, which entered the Willamette River June 6, 1945

freshman and sophomore male students.

"In early September 1947, tons of ROTC equipment began to arrive," wrote Schoenberg. "Jeeps, 400 M-1 army rifles, side arms and so forth piled up behind the administration building, seemingly without end, an appalling contrast with the meagerness of equipment supplied to Gonzaga's last peace-time military program, the renowned cadets of 1900."

That first year, there were four companies made up of 250 students. They attended military classes three times per week and the entire corps attended marching drill from 11:10 until 12:00 noon every Tuesday.

In 1949, ROTC was academically recognized as the department of military science and tactics; an ROTC band and rifle team were organized, and "thus, the unit became an established feature of campus life," says Schoenberg.

With the success of the ROTC Infantry unit, on December 19, 1950, an application for the establishment of an Ordnance unit was submitted by President Corkery, and was quickly accepted.

In 1950, President Truman came to

campus to accept an honorary citation from Gonzaga (he opted for a citation over an honorary degree, saying he felt uncomfortable earning an honorary degree from any college but the one at which he had studied.) The ROTC standard, with a glad and the university's coat of arms in the center, had been designed and was expected to take six months to embroider and complete, but "providentially, the standard was finished a few days before President Truman's arrival."

President Truman agreed to present the colors to the ROTC unit during the ceremony for his honorary citation. This was the first time an American president had presented military colors to an ROTC unit. "I was highly interested and highly pleased at the work the ROTC did, and it gives me great pleasure to present this flag," said Truman.

This description of ROTC, from 1959, explained to the public its goal and purpose. "The object of the ROTC program is to provide in peacetime, a yearly quota of highly qualified Second Lieutenants to meet, in the order stated, the annual needs of the Regular Army, the

Active Army, the early deployed Reserve Component Troop Program units, and the annual and emergency leadership requirements of the Active Army and Reserve Components for replacement and expansion of the Army."

The popularity of the ROTC program continued to grow over the years, and the program changed a bit. In the 1964-1965 school year, it became a volunteer program for the first two years. For those who were accepted into the program their junior year, an added incentive of 90 cents per day sweetened the deal and provided additional income. Many young men used this income to pay for their off-campus housing, which, due to a housing shortage, was required for most male students after their sophomore year. Another change came in 1976, when women were welcomed into the ROTC program.

Despite the changes over the years, one thing remained the same: Gonzaga's commitment to supporting the military, and producing educated and exemplary officers. It is true, there's something about a soldier – especially a Gonzaga soldier. ■