

Now & Then in Ripon ... Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society

Raised to Be a Soldier

The Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh recently received new life as *WLUK* reported that a campus spokesman confirmed last week Friday that it will continue under the guidance of Marquette University.

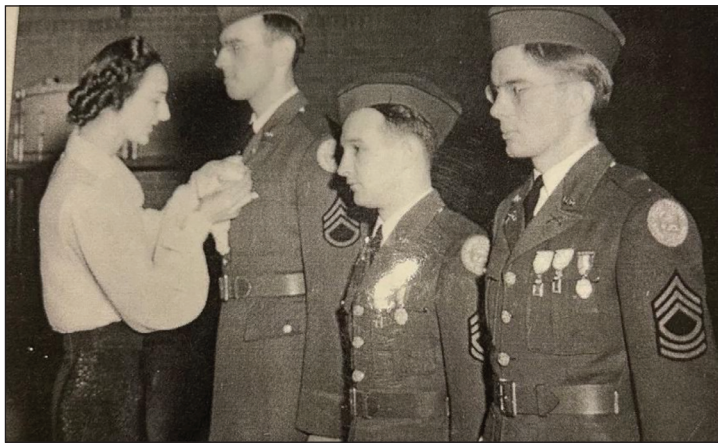
The article noted that “it was not immediately clear Friday” the status of UW-Oshkosh’s adjunct facilities, which includes Ripon College, UW-Green Bay, St. Norbert College and Marian University. The U.S. Army Cadet Command initially announced in July that it was cutting ROTC at 10 universities nationwide, which includes UW-Oshkosh.

If Ripon College is not included in the plan to remain associated with UW-Oshkosh, its ROTC program is slated to end next spring after being found on the campus for more than 100 years.

The ROTC program started as the Student Army Training Corps (SATC). The Ripon College website states: “Established in 1919, Ripon’s ROTC program was one of the first in the state of Wisconsin. Over the past century, thousands of Ripon students have participated, and remarkably, seven of our alumni have gone on to become generals in the United States Army — one of the highest cadet-to-general ratios in the country.”

Today, the Ripon Historical Society remembers Ripon College ROTC cadet Franklin B. Farvour (1919-2006).

Farvour’s grandfather, Rueben Farvour (1842-1891), was an infantryman in the Civil War. His father, Franklin P. Farvour (1863-1940), served in the Wisconsin National Guard from 1910 to 1913, was in the Army during World War I and also



THIS UNDATED PHOTOGRAPH shows Ripon College student Rosemary “Rosie” Due Mez Farvour pinning something onto the uniform of Ripon College ROTC cadet Franklin B. Farvour. The other two cadets are unidentified. Rosie and Frank married in 1942. *submitted photo*

served in the Army Reserves. His stint in the Wisconsin National Guard helped him pay his tuition at Ripon College, from which he graduated in 1916 with a degree in history and a special interest in military history.

Farvour wrote in a book of memories he produced just before he passed away that “I was, to a degree, raised to be a soldier.” He noted that his father, “was very much the soldier and brought me up in that environment. Orders were orders and no back talk was tolerated. It was taken for granted that I would attend Ripon College and participate in the ROTC program.”

Farvour grew up at 932 Woodside Ave., graduated from Ripon High School in 1937 and then attended Ripon College, graduating in 1941.

He wrote, “Along in 1936 or 1937 I was visited by a Naval Reserve recruiter who painted a beautiful picture for me and got my signature on an enlistment form, fingerprints and all. As I was not yet 18 this needed dad’s permission and that was NOT forthcoming. It was made plain

that I would be taking ROTC and any military service that I entered would be the ARMY, NOT the Navy. That was that.”

Farvour went on to write, “I entered Ripon College as a freshman in September of 1937. As was required of all male students except those that played in the band, I was automatically enrolled in the ROTC basic course. Monday was drill day, everyone wore their uniform all day, the campus looked like a regular military establishment.”

At Ripon College, Farvour became a member of the Phi Kappa Pi fraternity which lived at Merriman Hall. (Merriman Hall was located at 470 Congress St. and was razed in 2021.) He was given the nickname “Burlap” and the Phi Kappa Pi annual report the G-T stated Farvour was on the ROTC rifle team.

After his freshman year Farvour applied for, and was accepted to, the advanced ROTC course, which had a quota of 22 students. He wrote that “The advanced course was much more military and ‘college’ as the course earned two and a half hour credits per term. Beside that, we were paid 25 cents a day! This we never saw however, it went towards paying for the tailor-made officers’ uniforms we had to buy as part of the deal.”

Farvour became a staff sergeant his sophomore year and earned the duty of carrying the national colors at drill and parades. His junior year, Farvour is listed in the G-T under “Military Men” as “a staff sergeant and winner of the outstanding junior award the second quarter.”

Between his junior and senior year at Ripon College, Farvour recalled that “In the summer of 1940 we attended six weeks of field training at Camp Custer, Mich. This time

Remembering Ripon’s Franklin Farvour as ROTC future uncertain after 100+ Years

we received 70 cents a day which we actually got the last day of camp — a big \$31.50! In those depression days that really did feel like a fortune.” (\$31.50 would be equal to approximately \$723 today.)

The 1941 G-T noted that there were six seniors from Phi Kappa Pi in ROTC. Farvour was reported as being “appointed captain of Company E. As a result, some of the fellows were informed that keeping in step and standing still while at attention were good ideas.”

Farvour noted that “Participation in ROTC was one of the things needed to be a ‘BMOC’ — Big Man on Campus. Patriotism ran high and the uniform both worn and looked upon with pride. The annual Military Ball was the social event of the year. The nine ‘elite’ cadet officers selected a female student as their honorary counterpart and ‘sponsor’ of their position. My selection was Rosemary DuMez, my wife to be.”

He went on to explain that “The ball was proceeded by a ‘tea dance’ at which time the sponsors were formally presented to the student body. During the ceremony, the girls were seated and we stood behind them. On command, we were to draw share with a flourish and present the saber salute. The tip of my blade whistled within millimeters of Rosemary’s ear! One we had led the grand march, our social duties were thankfully over.”

Near the end of his senior year, Farvour and his fellow Ripon College ROTC seniors received orders to go to Camp Grant, Ill. to take a final physical examination for their commissions.

“Part of our contract for getting the advanced course and commission was that we were expected to put in a year of active duty,” he wrote. “We all looked forward to that, after all it was a steady job that would pay us \$125 basic and \$18 for rations each month.” (\$143 per month is worth approximately \$3,283 today or \$39,396 per year.)

When Farvour graduated in the spring of 1941, he removed his college and cadet insignia from his uniform and put on what he described as “shiny new gold bars of the second lieutenant.” He added that “We received our commissions along with our certificates of graduation.”

Farvour immediately quit his job in at a local canning factory

the first week of July, when he received his active-duty orders. He was to be released from active duty and return to Ripon a year later on July 7, 1942, unaware that the Japanese would bomb Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. This surprise attack led to the entry of the United States in World War II and Farvour’s participation in the war as an Army officer.

He went on to serve the country from 1941 until 1981, achieving the rank of lieutenant colonel. During active duty in World War II, Farvour was in the European Theater with the signal corps, and after the war he continued to serve in the Army Reserve.

Farvour stated in a *Fond du Lac Reporter* article from 2001 that during World War II “I had a special, highly technical unit. We had 137 men and seven officers. We were a communications company.”

He added that his unit provided the signal communications for the 52nd Troop Carrier Wing, “which was the outfit that carried the paratroopers into battle, towed gliders and did re-supply and air evacuation.”

After active duty, Farvour returned to Ripon and was a partner in the Farvour Insurance Agency. He also was a registered land surveyor, town of Ripon treasurer, stock room supervisor for the chemistry department at Ripon College, and an adjunct scholar of anthropology at Ripon College. In 1991, he was honored as a member of the Ripon College Golden R Club. His award, found in the archives of the Ripon Historical Society reads, “in recognition of fifty years of loyalty, devotion and support of Ripon College.”

Farvour married his college sweetheart, Rosemary Due Mez Farvour (1921-1998), in May of 1942 and they had three children Marilyn “Lynne” Farvour Shaw (1943-2022), Thomas Farvour (1947-2021) and Richard Farvour. Thomas served in the Air Force during the Vietnam War, making four generations of the Farvour family to serve their country in the military during time of war.

The Ripon Historical Society is the oldest continually operating historical society in Wisconsin. It is open Fridays and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For more information, visit www.riponhistory.org, facebook.com/riponhistoricalsociety or instagram.com/riponhistoricalsociety/.



THE 1941 RIPON College Crimson yearbook features this photograph of ROTC Co. E. Ripon resident Franklin B. Farvour was the company captain his senior year at Ripon College. After graduating from Ripon College, Farvour dedicated 40 years to the serving his country. *submitted photo*