



# ROTC

## *Program Deactivated*



After nearly 40 years of training cadets, Washington and Lee's Army Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program is coming to an end.

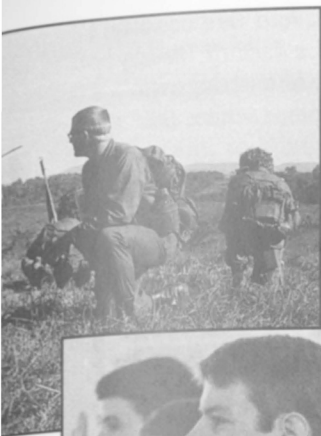
The U.S. Army announced in July that it was deactivating 50 ROTC programs at college campuses across the country, including Washington and Lee.

The programs were closed, the Army said, because of budget cuts in the military and because, as the force becomes smaller, fewer junior officers will be needed. The reductions were based on the concept of "viability." The Army judges viability according to enrollment figures, the number of officers a program produces, and the quality of its officers.

"Quality has never been a problem at W&L," says Lt. Col. Joel J. Snow, chairman of the University's military science department. "Every year we produce very fine officers. But our numbers have been consistently low for the last six years."

In June 1988 the University's ROTC unit commissioned 10 officers. Fifteen were commissioned in 1989. This past June, only five received commissions. "To be considered viable, a unit must commission at least 15 each year," Snow explains. "This was not a casual decision. The decision to close the 50 programs was agonizingly reached all the way up to the secretary of the Army and the chief of staff. In an era of defense cutbacks, we simply have too many resources committed here for the number of officers gained."

Four years ago, Washington and Lee's ROTC program was placed under "region intensive management," which Snow defines as a type of probation. Since then, the department has intensified its recruiting efforts. The officers distributed



marketing surveys among the student body and completely revised their process for attracting new cadets. Their work produced some results, Snow says, but not enough: "We just didn't see very much on the horizon."

The ROTC program will continue to operate at Washington and Lee during the 1990-91 academic year. It will not, however, admit any new students. Those cadets—freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior—who are currently enrolled in ROTC will be able to leave the program if they wish, or transfer to another school with ROTC. But neighboring Virginia Military Institute has agreed to instruct ROTC cadets on the W&L campus until June 1994, when the last of the currently enrolled cadets will graduate. There are no plans for cross-enrollment with VMI after 1994.

Since ROTC was established at Washington and Lee in 1951, the number of participants has fluctuated, hitting a record

low during the Vietnam War era and rebounding in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Snow believes several factors have caused its recent fall in popularity. But whatever the reason, he and his colleagues believe that ROTC will be hard to replace.

"ROTC has been a tradition at Washington and Lee for the past 40 years," he says. "After all, this is a school that's named after two of our nation's most famous generals. The values that we often associate with W&L—honor, service to country, service to humanity—are the same values that ROTC represents. We also provide unique leadership opportunities to students."

It is conceivable that one of these days, another

ROTC unit might begin at Washington and Lee. While Snow thinks that's unlikely, he's not ruling anything out.

"Once ROTC leaves a campus, it seldom comes back," he says. "But who knows what the future holds?"