

A&M and academies differ slightly, but both still make military officers

By WENDY JOHNSON
Staff Writer

A fish here, a doolie there, sometimes a plebe. These are different names for the same thing ... a freshman at a military academy.

Although the names change from school to school, there are many similarities between the Corps of Cadets at Texas A&M and the military academies. But the most distinguishing difference is the spirit shown at A&M.

"There's more pride in the uniform down in Texas," says Ensign James Cochrane, a recent graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, who attended a conference at A&M last spring. "It's not fashionable to enjoy (yourself) at the Academy."

Although the corps is smaller, the traditions are stronger, he says.

Richard Kidd, senior at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y., attended the same conference.

"I was impressed with A&M," he says. "Everyone was really friendly, and proud of their traditions."

A&M's Corps is the only other seven day military institution in the nation besides the military academies. But here the cadets' weekends are usually their own unless there is a special required event or they are kept in as a disciplinary measure.

At the Naval Academy, freshmen are on duty all the time and get no weekends off during the semester. Out of 16 weekends, sophomores get five weekends off and juniors get eight. Seniors are off every weekend. At West Point, freshmen get one free weekend per semester, sophomores two or three, juniors four to six and seniors get every weekend off.

These academies also have regulations concerning cars. At West Point everyone is allowed to have a car, but only seniors are allowed to operate and maintain one.

The Naval Academy allows students to have cars, but makes it difficult for some students to drive them. Freshmen are required to park seven miles away and are restricted to staying within seven miles of campus. Sophomores also have to keep cars seven miles out, but are allowed a bigger radius. Juniors can keep cars two miles from campus and enjoy a larger area of freedom. Seniors can keep a car on campus (if they're good) and drive anywhere.

Hazing is very light at the Naval Academy, according to Cochrane.

"They don't even like us screaming at them," he says.

Any hazing takes the form of mental stress, rather than physical. They are not allowed to make underclassmen do sit-ups and pushups. The situation is much the same at West Point.

A few cadets die each year in accidents but none have died as a re-



sult of hazing or training.

One notable difference between A&M and the others is the entrance requirements. The Naval Academy, Air Force Academy and West Point all require a congressional nomination. Then applicants must be accepted by one of the academies. It's a long, complicated process that must be started early in the junior year of high school. At A&M, it's easier to get in. We accept anyone.

Jeff Brady, senior cadet at A&M, says this is an important difference.

"If you can get in the University, you can get in the Corps of Cadets," Brady says. "The other institutions take a good thing and fine polish it; A&M takes raw material and develops it to the fullest."

Brady says the Corps of Cadets at A&M has an advantage over the other academies because the cadets at A&M are less isolated and intermingle with civilian students. This less exclusive atmosphere and the deeper traditions at A&M are a bonus for cadets, Brady says.

Scott Sandlin, also a senior cadet at A&M, attended a conference at the Naval Academy last spring. He says the Academy's traditions and treatment of underclassmen were almost identical to A&M; the freshmen had to know campusology, etc. The Naval Academy's uniqueness comes from the all military atmosphere. Everyone takes naval science and a set of required extra-curricular studies. Cadets at A&M also have more liberties; at the Naval Academy the gates are closed at a certain hour and the campus is

walled in.

The biggest difference Sandlin sees is in the treatment of females at the Naval Academy.

"The set up was lots different," Sandlin says. "There were no women's outfits; the women were all mixed in with everyone else." (The rooms each have their own private showers and bathrooms).

"It was lots better — I didn't see any discrimination of women like here," Sandlin says.

The Naval Academy has 95 women in each class of 1200. "They get negative and positive responses," Cochrane says. "It depends on the company, the group, and the girl in question."

Ten percent of the corps at West

Point is women. They were first accepted in 1976. These women, too, are judged by their individual merit.

A&M cadets get a pretty good deal on uniforms, too. At the Naval Academy, midshipmen pay for their uniforms and the upkeep of them. They can get uniform loans, but they must be paid back during the school year.

At West Point, uniforms and other supplies are deducted from their monthly pay, which is half of a base second lieutenants pay, or \$480 per month. The most cadets ever see of the paycheck is \$270 when they are seniors, according to West Point senior Richard Kidd.

At A&M, uniforms are furnished free until the junior year when cadets must decide whether or not to take a contract. If they are contracted, the uniforms remains free, if

not, they pay \$100 per semester uniform fee. Cadets are responsible for cleaning costs.

Cadets at West Point and A&M wear uniforms that are unique to the school and bear little resemblance to an active duty uniforms. The students at the Naval Academy and Air Force Academy wear uniforms similar to active duty uniforms, but are customized to signify cadet rank.

"But none has stuff to shine and put on like we do," Sandlin says.

Aggies earn ROTC medals and ribbons they wear on their uniforms. Cadets at West Point can only wear actual Army ribbons and medals they earn during prior service or temporary summer active duty.

Students at the military academies are considered members of the armed forces and enjoy active duty privileges according to their ranks, unlike A&M cadets, Kidd says. During the summers they serve temporary tours of duty with the regular armed services to gain exposure to and experience for future work. Naval cadets go on cruises and Army cadets go to basic training-type camps and specialized training programs. Aggies go to an ROTC summer camp in their junior year if they are under contract, with an option to attend camp the summer following their senior year. Upon graduation, cadets get a few weeks off and then go to work paying back the years they owe the military.

None of the academies march or practice with live weapons unless during training in the summer. They use actual rifles in parades, but the triggers are soldered, the barrels plugged or the firing pins removed.

Naval Academy graduate James Cochrane says a strength of the Naval Academy is that it puts out dedicated officers who are patriotic and have a keen sense of duty. A weakness is arrogance and the belief they are better than other ROTC members, he says. Another disadvantage is their isolation from civilian students. Since the Naval Academy is an engineering school, it's also easy to escape the liberal arts, and written and spoken communication skills are frequently lacking.

Sandlin, of A&M, cites the diversity of education, curriculum and students at A&M as a definite strength. He also says there are more ways to get involved here.

"The academies get more military education," Sandlin says. "Though A&M gets more than a totally civilian college would."

Colonel Donald Johnson, assistant commandant of the corps at A&M and retired military officer, says Aggies do very well in the service. A&M provided the armed services with 220 officers last year, he says, and commissions officers three times a year, compared to once a year at the other academies. Johnson says the Army is the highest single employer of Aggie graduates. □

	Texas A&M University	Air Force Academy	Naval Academy	West Point
Freshmen	Fish	Doolies	Plebes	Plebes
Sophomores	Pissheads	3rd Class	Youngsters	Yearlings
Juniors	Surgebutts	2nd Class	2nd Class or Secundos	Cows
Seniors	Zips	1st Class or Firsties	1st Class or Firsties	Firsties