

Female cadets renew old struggle

Challenges remain same throughout history of women in Corps



Photo by Kathy Haveman

Squadron 14 members (left to right) Ann Garcia, Marilyn Hodges, Carmen Goyette, Naomi Williams and Trish Sexton jog on the Quad Saturday.

By Andrea Warrenburg

REPORTER

Ever since Texas A&M celebrated its 25th year of coeducation last year, much attention has been given to the pioneer women who were allowed to join the Corps of Cadets 11 years ago. But today's female cadets face many of the same challenges as their predecessors.

"It's a challenge unlike anything I've ever experienced," said Amy Beth Davis, a junior in W-1 2nd member of the Ross Volunteers. "We have the same challenges as the guys, but we just handle them in a different way."

The physical and mental challenges are the same for men and women of equal rank. Like their male counterparts, freshman women are required to wake up early in the morning and answer to upperclassmen, female units go on mile runs and do push-ups (not on their knees), and senior women wear

their boots with pride.

Among the 1,800 cadets in the Corps, about 75 are women. They have separate female units rather than being integrated with the men. However, separate units are not the only dividing wall between male and female cadets.

"Customs and courtesies aren't always respected," Marilyn Hodges, executive officer of Squadron 14, said. "Little things like not saying 'Howdy' or even being avoided."

Some women cadets who have come to expect a degree of prejudice recognize and appreciate the support they're given and the respect they've earned.

"Regardless of what we accomplish in or out of the Corps, there will always be a few who don't want us here," Davis said. "Yet others are incredibly supportive."

Regina Chapman, a freshman in Squadron 14, said, "We're just as good as everyone else. But if we mess up, as the minority, we don't blend in as well and we're in the spotlight."

Along with the pressures of being in the Corps, female cadets also must cope with the stigma of being labeled a "Waggie."

"It's not really socially acceptable to be a female cadet," Hodges said. "And I don't like being judged before people know me."

Chapman said, "People should see that I'm an Aggie and a fish first, then that I'm a female cadet and shouldn't think less of me for it."

Davis said she tries not to let the prejudice affect her by striving to be the best cadet she can.

"People have different attitudes about female cadets," she said. "But if you take it personally, it can hurt you. You just have to fit in and try your best to achieve."

Female cadets can attain any position in the Corps that the men can, including membership in the Ross Volunteers, the Aggie Band, the Fish Drill Team and Parsons Mounted Cavalry. And the challenges and rewards of being in the Corps are just as real for them as for the males.

"The honors and privileges I have received from the Corps far outweigh what I've had to put up with," Davis said. "I do my best to excel and reach my goals and try not to step on any toes."

Friendships with fellow cadets are often the best support system for the women.

"You have your buddies who know what you're going through and will support you," Chapman said.

Naomi Williams, commanding officer of Squadron 14, said, "My goal as a senior is to make it better for the female cadets that are coming up."

Corps sign-up reasons range beyond visions of senior boots

By Andrea Warrenburg

REPORTER

There is no one reason why freshmen from across the country join the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets.

Reasons range from hopes of a future commission in the armed services, scholarships, or the small group security within a large school.

And of course every freshman signs his name on a Corps contract with visions of senior boots dancing round in his head. But to fulfill those goals, freshmen must first contend with being the low men on the Corps totem pole and with the unexpected.

"The Corps is not what I expected," Carl Kelly, a freshman in Squadron 3, said. "There were many surprises."

One of those surprises is the lack of freedom. Every daily activity that most take for granted, from making a bed to eating, is regulated and watched closely by upperclassmen.

Kyle Sampson, a freshman in Squadron 3, said "You have to get up early in the morning, you have to cut your hair and you even have to eat in a certain way in a certain place. You may think all the little details they stress are stupid, but it's all for a reason."

By enforcing the rules and perpetuating the traditions, the upperclassmen simply are doing their job.

"We catch the most flack from the sophomores," Kelly said. "It's their job to motivate us. You can tell they get sick of it sometimes, but they have to do it because they have upperclassmen watching them also."

David Burger, also a freshman in Squadron 3, said, "But it's always the juniors who manage to make us crack a smile. We just don't let anyone see it."

With the stress of being a lowly fish in the Corps on top of the stress of making good grades, how do they cope with the pressures?

"It's all good bull," Regina Chapman, a freshman in Squadron 14, said. "You have to take it one day at a time and have fun with it."

But some cannot cope with the pressures and drop out.



Photo by Frederick D. Joe

Freshman Julian Garya humps-it at the request of Carl Sepulveda, a senior bioengineering major from Houston. After 1 p.m., when a senior asks a freshman on the Quad which outfit he is from, the freshman must do his outfits' hump-it.

"There's a time to 'play Corps' and a time to study," Sampson said. "But if you can handle everything in the Corps and your grades, other things that will come later in life will be easy."

Kelly said, "Everyone hits that low point where you consider dropping out. The Corps isn't for everyone. But you always have your buddies to help you through it."

And most freshmen agree that the best part of being in the Corps is the camaraderie.

"The best thing is the lifelong friendships we're building," John Galindo, a freshman in Squadron 3, said. "There isn't anything I wouldn't do for my buddies."

"We stress unity," John Heye, commanding officer of Squadron 3, said. "It makes up for the loneliness they might feel from being away from home for the first time. We want them to help each other out."

Besides learning how to deal with people, the freshmen will learn valuable leadership qualities that will help them after graduation.

"Different aspects of the Corps can be applied to real life, like time management and how to work with people," Sampson said.

Kelly said, "In the long run, the Corps will give me the leadership skills that employers in the business world will be looking for."

Naomi Williams, commanding officer of Squadron 14, said "The freshmen are the Corps. They are why we're here."

Heye said, "These fish are responsible for carrying it all on to the next fish class, so what we teach them will perpetuate."

Whatever the reason for joining the Corps, the freshmen are all looking forward to the same thing—Final Review.

In other Senate business, an Academic Affairs resolution on core curriculum for students transferring to A&M or changing majors was approved unanimously.

The resolution states that students transferring to A&M who entered any institution of higher education as a freshman after the spring semester of 1988 will be placed under the A&M catalog in effect during the first semester of their freshman year.

Other transfer students will be placed under the 1987-88 Catalog or an earlier catalog, as the student's dean determines appropriate. Students entering A&M under catalogs that do not require compliance with the core curriculum do not become subject to it by changing majors. However, all students graduating from A&M after Sept. 1, 1995 must satisfy core curriculum requirements.

The Senate also made some changes in protocol by awarding credit by examination in foreign languages not taught at A&M.

A resolution was passed that will allow cases in which students who wish to demonstrate proficiency in a language not taught at A&M to fulfill the foreign language requirement of the core curriculum.

According to the resolution, the student must request an examination from the head of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages, and the department in turn will coordinate the administration of special examinations to demonstrate foreign language proficiency.

This will include finding an appropriate examination to test the student's proficiency, informing the student how to arrange to take that exam, and certifying the results to the student's advisor.

Senate

(Continued from page 1)

reaching a more realistic, attainable goal of retirement via the 55-30 route than the current point system, which requires 95 points to qualify for early retirement without penalty.

Storey said House Bill 85 would allow retirement with full benefits when an individual attains 85 points, as well as allowing A&M to be more competitive with universities in other states which have similar early retirement benefits.

In a related resolution, the Senate approved that provisions be made for members of the Organization of Retired People who want to transfer to TRS.

Storey said the switch from ORP to TRS is purely optional.

In last Thursday's edition of the Battalion the spelling of Legett Hall was incorrect. We regret any inconvenience this may have caused.

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