

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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MA'AM, YES MA'AM

Female students work to find their places in the Corps of Cadets

By Kelcey Reiger
THE BATTALION

Jessica Richardson, a junior English major and member of Company P-2, decided to join the Corps of Cadets because she wanted to be able to make a difference in people's lives and take advantage of the leadership opportunities. "The connections I make with people in the Corps now are connections that I will carry with me after college and possibly through my entire life," Richardson said. "I am part of the living history and the lifeblood of A&M and the things I do now directly affect the lives of my subordinates, both spiritually and morally. As a member of the Corps, I help keep the traditions and the camaraderie, which are the heart and soul of this school, alive and well."

"Marching in my first football game freshman year was a great experience. There is something about marching down a street lined with people and knowing they are all watching you."

— Jessica Richardson
junior Corps of Cadets member

Women were first admitted into the Corps of Cadets in 1974. Since then, a woman's role as a cadet has become an increasingly integral part of the Corps and its history. Although women in the Corps have struggled to be considered equals in the male-dominated organization, women have found their place and have taken pride in their role in the Corps.

Richardson said a woman's experience in the Corps can be slightly different than a male cadet's since there are fewer women in the Corps. Women are sometimes held to higher standards, she said.

"When we make mistakes, we are more likely to stand out simply because people take a specific interest in women in the Corps," Richardson said. "We are constantly under the microscope. This can be a good thing, however, because it gives us a chance to represent the Corps in a special way."

Although being a woman in the Corps can be different in many ways, women in the Corps experience the same exciting experiences as their male counterparts.

"Marching in my first football game my freshman year was a great experience," Richardson said. "There is something about marching down a street lined with people and knowing they are all watching you. That makes you straighten your shoulders and raise your chin a little higher. It was then that the knowledge of what I was doing really hit me — I was following in the footsteps of thousands of cadets who had passed under the reviewing stands before me."

A cadet's first march-in can be a memorable experience for any member of the Corps, but Richardson said there are some people who would prefer not to see women participating in march-in or the Corps.

Richardson said, "I think the treatment of women in the Corps has greatly improved and will continue to improve over the years, but I know that we do still have a long way to go."

"I, unfortunately, cannot honestly say that I never experienced problems with people both in and out of the Corps who believe that women do not have a place in the Corps."

"These incidents, however, are few and far between, and the overwhelming majority of male cadets treat females equally, hold them to the same standards and give them the same amount of respect as male cadets."

Female cadets may experience criticism for their involvement in the Corps, but male cadet David Torres Jr., a senior construction science major and member of A-Battery in the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band, said the criticisms are unnecessary. He said cadets need to acknowledge the benefits of having women in their outfits.

"I believe it is a good idea to have females in the Corps," Torres said. "It can be a good learning experience on how to work with the female gender. There are many cadets who are going to be commissioned into the military and they are going to have superior officers that are going to be female. So why not get used to working with (women in the Corp) now?"

Emily Porterfield, a senior recreation, parks and tourism sciences major and member of Squadron 16, said most men do not know how to treat women in the Corps.

"They (men) either degrade (women) because they feel threatened or they may treat them too nice because they don't want to mistreat them," Porterfield said. "Either way most girls are treated differently by the guys and resentment builds accordingly."

Porterfield said although male cadets may treat the female cadets a little differently, the Corps, in general, treats females equally.

"I feel it is a privilege to be one of the few



CARRIE CARTER • THE BATTALION

Freshman Corps member and Animal Science major **Shawna Adams** waits to march into Kyle Field on Saturday afternoon. She is a member of Company V-1.

girls on campus wearing a uniform." Porterfield said. "I like the extra challenge of the Corps and I really enjoy the military lifestyle. I didn't want to look back 20 years from now and wonder, 'what if...?'"

Although adversity is a common hurdle in a woman's experience in the Corps, there are quite a few advantages to being a woman in the Corps.

"My favorite part about being in the Corps is the challenges I have faced that have strengthened my character and the many friends I have made along the way," Porterfield said.

For Denise Phillips, a senior business administration major and member of the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band, being in the Corps

has been an asset to her personal development.

"I joined the Corps because I wanted to be in the band. But, in the process I became a more outgoing person and now I am able to confront people and meet people because the confidence in myself has improved."

Phillips said being a woman in the Corps has its incentives when it comes to the little things.

"Female cadets do have the option of keeping their hair long, as long as it is above the collar when in uniform," Phillips said.

"And we also have our own bathroom with a lock, which comes in handy when living with hundreds of guys. And we get to wear skirts, which can be a nice break from those un-flattering uniform pants."

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