

June - August, 1962

The 1963 Class of USAFA Prep School (PS) Cadet Candidates reported for our 8-week basic training at Lakeland AFB, TX.

The first day we were issued our fatigue uniforms, which included blue pith helmets, signifying that we were preparing to, hopefully, attend the AFA. All other basic training units wore desert brown pith helmets, which immediately set us apart from the other units. (We were also the only unit surrounded by 2 barracks of WAFs!)

We immediately began learning marching commands to participate in the weekly/graded Saturday morning parades for all basic training units. We had 2 weeks to get ready for our first Saturday morning parade. The first Drill Instructor (DI) was assigned to us for week and then another DI was assigned to us for the 2-hour, daily marching instruction. We called the 2nd DI 'mush mouth' because we all had difficulty understanding his commands. He would give us a command and some of us stopped and saluted, others did a right oblique, and still others did a rear march! After the gaggle stopped, the DI would yell at us and have us drop for pushups! (This went on daily for the rest of the week.) About the 3rd day, when this DI asked the rhetorical question as to 'why we dumb squats couldn't march better?' someone naively answered that the DI sounded like he had marbles in his mouth! Well, that truthful answer got us many more pushups!

When we marched in our first Saturday parade, we were terrible and came in last place among 10 units. With us, hopefully, going to the Academy, the parade judges and Training Commander couldn't understand why we marched so badly. A similar week of poor training followed, and our unit finished last again in the parade—by a lot!

The Training Commander assigned us a new DI the next week; and as a result, our unit finished either first or second in the remaining parades.

Another story—as I mentioned above, our PS unit was housed in barracks surrounded by 2 WAF barracks.

About the 5th week into our training, the DI told us we would have a fire drill between 2–4AM the next week. When we heard the loud fire alarm in our barracks, we were to step into our brogans, put our blanket around us, and report to the paved area outside our barracks.

Well, the next week, the fire alarm started wailing and everyone did what they were instructed to do—except one football player who later left the Academy before classes began in August, 1963. This person reported in at the designated area but had no blanket around him! The WAFs in the surrounding barracks had obviously heard the firm alarm and went to the window to see what was happening. When they saw this well-built airman buck naked, except for his brogans, the WAFs started banging on their windows! The DI was very upset with us and had us doing many pushups into the morning.

We had a fire drill the next night, and the football player reported in at the designated area—again wearing only his brogans! The WAFs were banging on their windows again! We had no more fire drills!