

News: Army Consolidates Infantry  
Navy STA-21 Officer Program

# PROFILE

Life in the Armed Forces

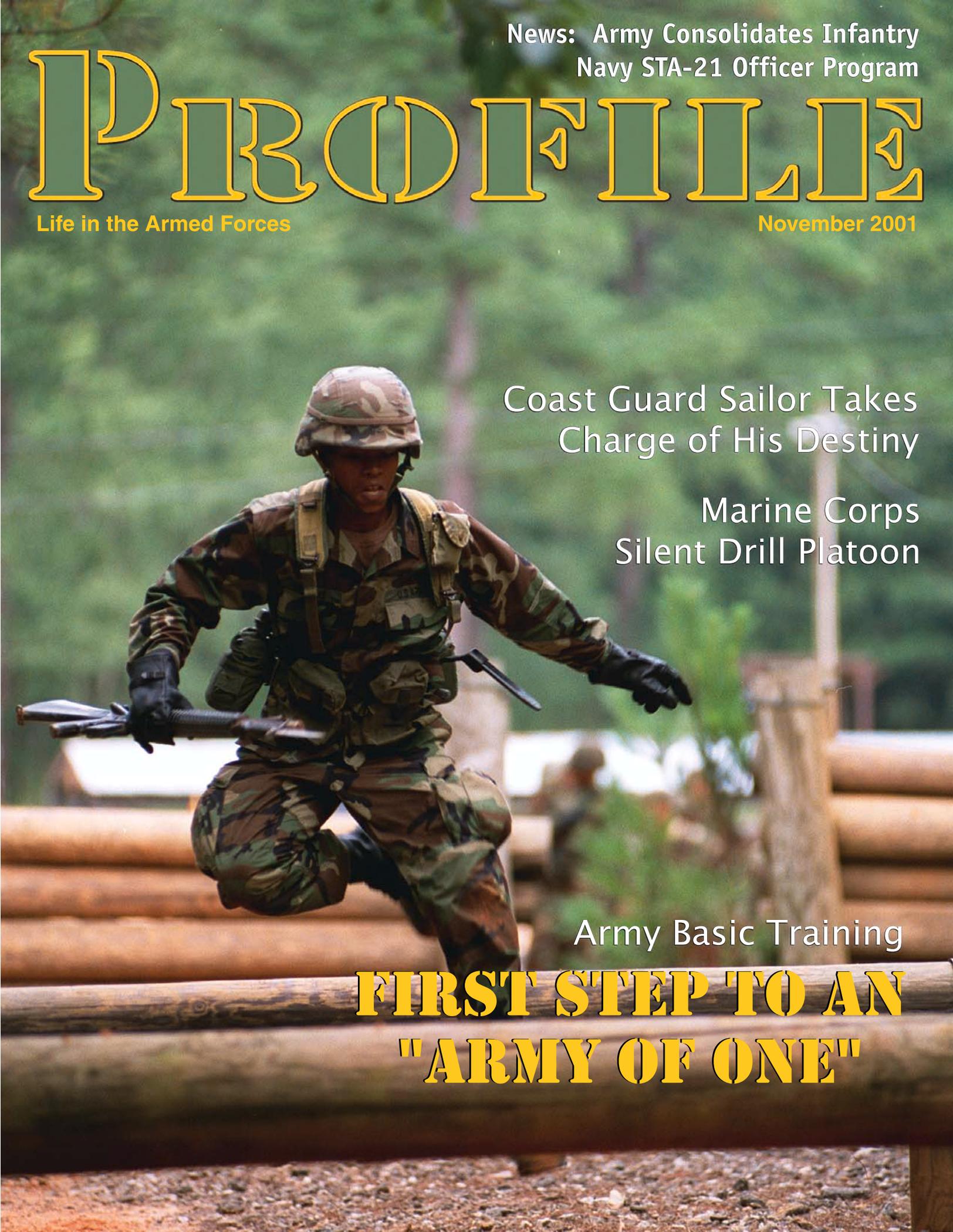
November 2001

Coast Guard Sailor Takes  
Charge of His Destiny

Marine Corps  
Silent Drill Platoon

Army Basic Training

**FIRST STEP TO AN  
"ARMY OF ONE"**



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The Secretary of the Navy has deter-

## Cover Story

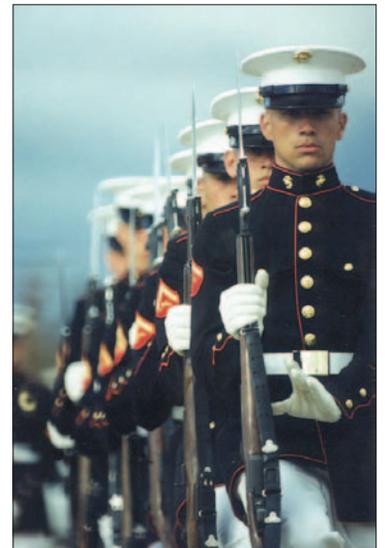
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**Front Cover**

Recruits in Basic Combat Training at Fort Jackson, S.C., run the Bayonet Assault Course. Fort Jackson is the Army's largest basic training post with thousands of recruits passing through its gates each year. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy J. O'Bryan)



**In the Spotlight.**

Each month on this page we spotlight servicemembers to show our readers the diverse opportunities the military services offer.

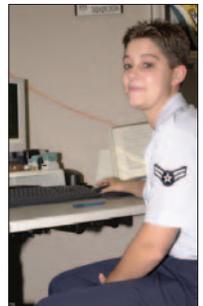
**Sgt. John Preston  
U.S. Marine Corps**

Preston, a Marine Corps Martial Arts Program Instructor, is stationed at Camp Allen in Norfolk, Va., is originally from Easley, S.C. He is a graduate of Easley Senior High School. He said the best part of the job is being able to teach Marines and being part of something very few can say - being a Marine. Preston has traveled to Japan, Kenya, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Hawaii and Guam.



**Airman 1st Class Michelle Nelson  
U.S. Air Force**

Nelson, an Information Management Specialist stationed at Langley Air Force Base, Va., is originally from Pittsburgh, Pa., and is a graduate of Belle Vernon High School. Her job includes serving as a workgroup manager in Air Combat Command headquarters on a local area network. She said the best part of the job is working with people. Langley is her first assignment after graduating from basic and technical training.



**Cpl. Jason J. Fitzpatrick  
U.S. Marine Corps**

Fitzpatrick, an Intermediate Motor Transportation Mechanic, stationed at the Marine Corps Security Forces Battalion, Norfolk, Va., is originally from San Diego and is a graduate of Poway High School. He likes his job because of the problem solving and hands-on aspects of his field. He is capable of inspecting and trouble-shooting a vehicle and completely rebuilding engines and transmissions. Fitzpatrick was previously assigned to Okinawa, Japan.



**Petty Officer 2nd Class  
Otha Baldwin  
U.S. Navy**

Baldwin, a Mess Specialist, serves as the Galley Watch Captain for the guided missile destroyer USS Laboon, home ported in Norfolk, Va. He is originally from Atlanta and graduated from North Georgia High School. His favorite part of his job is meeting new people and traveling the world. Baldwin has traveled to Italy, Spain, Croatia and Greece.



## Army Consolidating Infantry

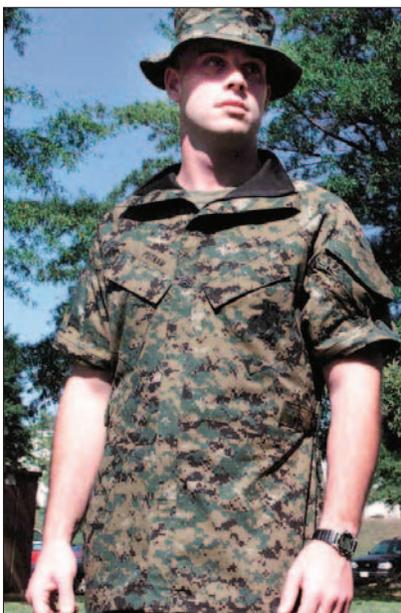
Three military occupational specialties will soon be consolidated into one infantry specialty. The anti-armor infantry (MOS 11H) and mechanized Infantry (MOS 11M) specialties will merge into one (MOS 11B, Infantryman). Officials said the initiative should provide better assignment, schooling and promotion opportunities for all infantrymen.

"The infantry has taken it upon itself to transform," said Lt. Col. David Goehring, infantry personnel systems officer for the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel. He was speaking of the Army's overall transformation to a more responsive force and said the consolidation is also "in sync" with a study by the Army to attain "multi-skilled" and "multi-capable" soldiers. — *Army News Service*

## Marines Get New Uniforms

By the end of this year, some Marines may be in new and different looking utility uniforms and boots, and by October 2005, all Marines will be in a new field uniform.

That's because the commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. James Jones, recently approved uniforms sporting the "pixel" camouflage scheme and rugged boots.



While the patterns on the new uniforms may be the most prominent new feature, they are hardly the only change.

There will be angled chest pockets with angled name tapes and service tapes. Also, the chest pockets will have Velcro fasteners. The uniforms will be made from a half-and-half blend of nylon and cotton.

Thanks to the use of wash-and-wear material, Marines won't have to spend so much time and money keeping up their "uniforms." The new infantry combat boots and jungle-and-desert boots will be made of rough leather. Just as the wash-and-wear blend means no more

ironing of uniforms, the rough leather means no more polishing of boots.

"A lot of teamwork went into this combat utilities program," said 1st Lt. Burrell Parmer, a spokesman for Marine Corps Systems Command in Quantico, Va. "It was for Marines and decided by Marines." — *Headquarters Marine Corps Public Affairs*

## New Armored Vehicle Begins Army Transformation

"It drives like a Caddy," was Pfc. Shaun Ratcliff's assessment of the new Army Light Armored Vehicle III displayed at the Pentagon May 17.

Ratcliff, an infantryman with the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry at Fort Lewis, Wash., said the eight-wheeled armored vehicle handles well and would be perfect for combat in the cities.

The Army wants to buy 2,131 of the vehicles to outfit six brigades.

The 37,000-pound vehicle has

a 350-horsepower diesel engine and will go 60 miles per hour with a full combat load. It's small and light enough to fit into a C-130 transport. As an infantry carrier, it has room for a nine-man squad and a crew of two.

The vehicle will serve as the basis for other specialized carriers. The basic version has a mount for a 40 mm grenade launcher, a .50-caliber machine gun or an M-240 7.62mm machine gun. The Army intends to mount an auto-loading 105 mm gun on one version. Other versions will be tailored to operate as engineer vehicles, mortar vehicles, medical evacuation vehicles, chemical warfare detection vehicles and anti-tank vehicles. — *American Forces Press Service*

## STA-21 Improves Sailors' Career Opportunities

The new navy officer accession program, Seaman to Admiral-21, is making it easier for sailors to transition from enlisted to officer while earning

college degrees. The program eliminates the inequities between commissioning pipelines. Previous officer programs varied greatly in the amount of pay and educational benefits available to sailors.

STA-21 streamlines the application process by consolidating eight of 14 commissioning paths by using a single application. There is one application deadline and one selection board. Under STA-21, sailors remain on active-duty while participating; they draw full pay, allowances, and benefits, and receive an education voucher valued at up to \$10,000 per year for tuition, fees and book costs.

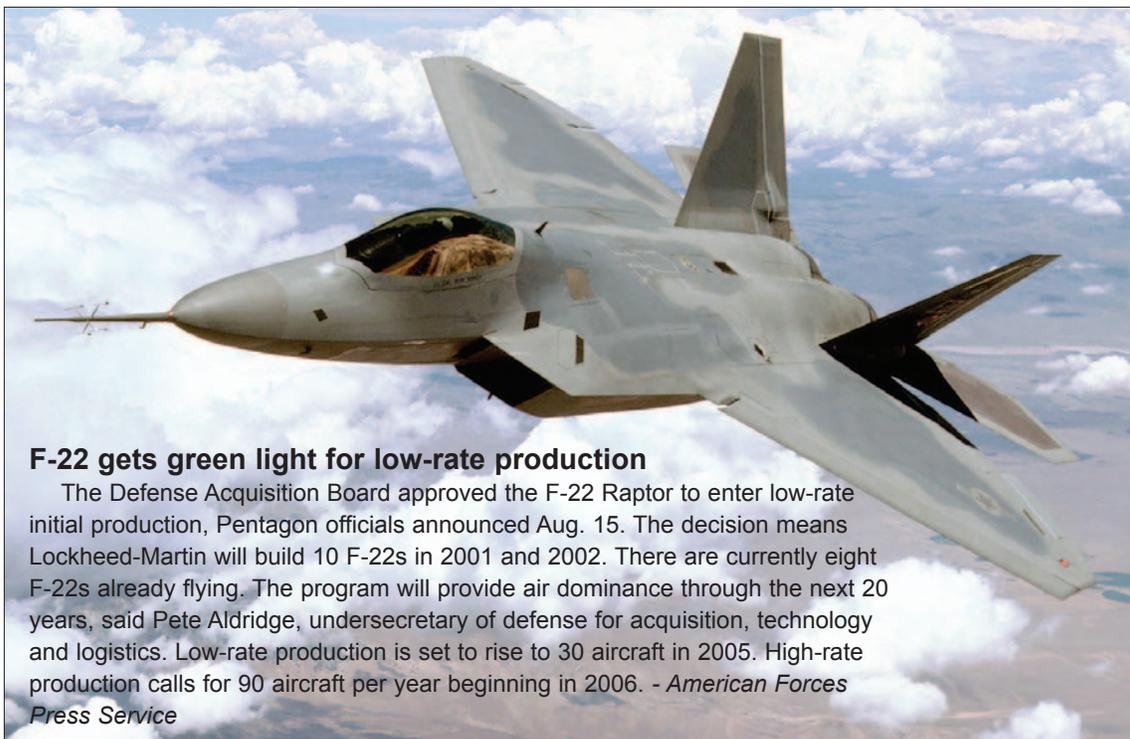
STA-21 will produce 490 officers annually, which is comparable to the number of sailors commissioned through the eight former commissioning paths it replaces. Participants in the new program will attend Naval ROTC-affiliated colleges or universities after gaining admission.

College preparation courses and officer indoctrination programs tailored to sailors' needs are incorporated into this pipeline.

The program combines the following eight former commissioning paths: Navy ROTC two-year, four-year, and Nurse option; Enlisted Commissioning Program Basic, Aviation option, Nuclear option and Civil Engineer Corps option; and the original Seaman to Admiral program. - *CNET Public Affairs*

### **Air Force Academy among nation's best**

The U.S. Air Force Academy was named second in the 2001 U.S. News and World Report rankings for top aeronautics and astronautics programs in the country.



### **F-22 gets green light for low-rate production**

The Defense Acquisition Board approved the F-22 Raptor to enter low-rate initial production, Pentagon officials announced Aug. 15. The decision means Lockheed-Martin will build 10 F-22s in 2001 and 2002. There are currently eight F-22s already flying. The program will provide air dominance through the next 20 years, said Pete Aldridge, undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics. Low-rate production is set to rise to 30 aircraft in 2005. High-rate production calls for 90 aircraft per year beginning in 2006. - *American Forces Press Service*

"We've known for decades that we have one of the finest undergraduate aerospace programs in the country," said Col. Neal Barlow, head of the academy's aeronautics department. "We hope that the rankings motivate some of America's brightest students to want to come here to the academy."

Barlow credits the outstanding nature of the program to cutting-edge technology the cadets work with on a daily basis.

For more information, visit [www.academyadmissions.com](http://www.academyadmissions.com). - *U.S. Air Force Academy Public Affairs*

### **ROTC cadets' stipend increases**

The Department of Defense recently announced a boost in the monthly stipend for Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets starting Oct. 1.

The Department of Defense will implement the program in two phases across two years,

but the first year's improvements are the most dramatic. Prior to this change, all cadets were entitled to a \$200 per month stipend, regardless of their position in ROTC.

The new stipend is \$250 for freshmen and sophomores, \$300 for juniors and \$350 for seniors. The second phase is effective Oct. 1, 2002, and increases the monthly payment for sopho-

mores to \$300, juniors to \$350 and seniors to \$400.

This increase means students could collect up to \$14,000 during their participation in an ROTC program.

This stipend is above and beyond the ROTC scholarship program that offers from \$3,000 per year up to full tuition scholarships.

### **USS Constellation Sailors Stay Navy for More Than \$1 Million**

Scores of Sailors aboard the aircraft carrier USS Constellation (CV 64) have been deciding to Stay Navy. As a result, the ship has disbursed more than \$1 million in selective reenlistment bonuses (SRBs) since getting underway for their six-month deployment.

"The Navy has raised its bonus caps to encourage its Sailors to stick around," said Navy Counselor 1st Class (AW) Steven Cullen, from Galt, Calif., of the career information office.

At the end of a Sailor's enlistment, the Navy can sometimes provide incentives to stay on board by rewarding them financially. Sailors choosing to reenlist may be entitled to SRBs up to \$45,000.

Fire Controlman 1st Class (SW) Todd Hollier, who works in combat systems, has been in the Navy for 10 years. After signing on for another six, he received a whopping SRB of \$45,000.



US ARMY

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## Sound off!

(Right) Pfc. Frank Delgado, 23, from San Diego stands at the position of parade rest during a performance at the White House Ellipse during a Twilight Tattoo Ceremony while another soldier gets ready to pull the lanyard on a 105mm howitzer. The field artillery gun from WW II is used in ceremonies. Since WW II, the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, known as The Old Guard, has served as the Army's Official Ceremonial Unit and Escort to the President of the United States. In that capacity, 3rd Infantry soldiers conduct military ceremonies at the White House, the Pentagon, national memorials, and elsewhere in the National Capital Region. Old Guard soldiers also maintain a 24-hour vigil at The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, provide military funeral escorts at Arlington National Cemetery and participate in parades at Fort Myer, Va., where the unit is based. (Photos by Sgt. Ramona E. Joyce, USA)



# First Step to an “Army of One”

Story by Heike Hasenauer  
Photos by Staff Sgt. Jack Siemieniec, USA



**D**OZENS of teenagers, their faces taut, their bodies suddenly shaky, stumbled from the buses that had transported them from the reception station at Fort Jackson, S.C., to their basic-training company barracks — their home for the next nine weeks.

As their drill sergeants shouted — “Hurry up, hurry up! We haven’t got all day! Fall in, fall in!” — the magnitude of what they had done registered fully for the first time. Some of them fought back tears as they stood in a haphazard formation, wearing their newly issued camouflage uniforms.

Many of them were away from home for

the first time. And judging from the looks on their faces, homesickness had hit them like a lightning bolt.

The night before these green recruits arrived, a different rotation of recruits in their final week of Basic Combat Training marched roughly eight miles from a field training site back to their barracks for a solemn ceremony that caps a three-day tactical event called Victory Forge.

The eighth-week ceremony signifies the transition from civilian to soldier, said Lt. Col. John Buckley, the students’ battalion commander.

Still wearing their field gear and camouflage paint, the young troops marched smartly into formation, to the tune “I’m Proud To Be An American.”

As a light rain fell from the midnight sky, a traditional black cauldron of fire burned brightly, its orange embers crackling and sending sparks dancing through the darkness.

Orange spotlights, provided by a camera

crew from the Army’s new advertising agency encircled the large pot so the crew could more easily film Company B’s 3rd Platoon, the unit they had followed throughout its nine-week training cycle for GOARMY.COM website clips and television recruiting ads.

The scene bore a striking resemblance to the “Survivor” television series set where, each week, the cast silently awaits the decision about who will be voted off the island.

At this point, the eighth week of basic combat training, there was little chance an individual could be booted out, Buckley said. The only potential obstacle to graduation now would be a debilitating injury or a Jekyll and Hyde-like personality change.

Buckley opened the ceremony with some advice to the tired and dirty men and women, who hadn’t yet showered or sat down to a traditional meal.

“As you continue on your journey in the Army, you may need a shot of inspiration,”

he said. "If so, think back on the faces and names of the soldiers to your left and right, the pain and gain of Victory Forge, and the light and heat of the flame burning in front of you."

The fire, he said, is an eternal flame, representing the fire that burned "in the patriots yearning for freedom ... inside the bellies of the doughboys fighting in Europe, inside the GIs fighting against the Axis powers, and the fires our adversary started in the Iraqi desert. It also symbolizes all the soldiers who have completed basic training before you, and all of those yet to come."

"Just as it takes heat and pressure in a forge to make steel, the heat and pressure of basic combat training makes great soldiers," Buckley said. Finally, the battalion commander uttered the words the recruits were waiting to hear, "You are the newest soldiers in the greatest Army in the world."

To the sound of drum rolls, followed by music from the film "Bridge Over the River Kwai," the men and women fought back tears generated by pride in all they had achieved and hoped to achieve. After the ceremony, each of the five companies in the battalion conducted its own, more intimate, celebration. Each company commander presented his troops with a small plastic Army Values card that they'd hang on the chain with their dog tags.

These values are also printed in bold, black letters on the walls above soldiers' bunks, and throughout BCT, the new recruits

focus on such values as integrity, honor and loyalty.

During the first week of BCT, these soldiers at Victory Forge had been mostly frightened teenagers at the Army's doorstep. But gradually, with guidance and encouragement from their drill sergeants, they learned to march with precision, assume responsibility with confidence and do for themselves what others had been doing for them for years, said company commander Capt. Chad Campfield.

In their second week of BCT, the training platoons completed the Bayonet Assault Course where they practiced bayonet assault maneuvers and challenged each other with pugil sticks that simulate the bayonet in close-combat training.

Later, as the sounds of artillery and machine-gun fire blared through overhead speakers, the recruits ran over log cross-beams, scaled wooden walls and inched their way, on their backs, through a barbed-wire "tunnel," all while holding their weapons over their heads. As they approached a concrete-enclosed sandpit, filled with "enemy" troops, they instinctively engaged the "weapon"-bearing green mannequins with their bayonets.

"We operate using the concept 'insist, assist,'" Campfield said. "Commanders lay out standards, and drill sergeants assist the soldiers through each event.

"Basic training isn't about trainees versus drill sergeants," Campfield said. "It's about

trainees versus tasks. Drill sergeants focus on standards — that's where the toughness of basic training lies."

Today stress in BCT results, as it always has, from the difficulty of a task. But drill sergeants rarely shout in soldiers' faces to elevate that stress.

Recruits experience stress not only from pending tasks, but from the BCT environment as well, said Capt. Jerry Fisher, commander of Co. E, 1st Bn., 61st Inf.

"By June it's about 100 degrees out here and sweat's pouring down the trainees' faces," Fisher said. Still, they do one hour of physical training or "PT" where they alternate muscular strength exercises and cardiovascular runs six days a week.

Trainees take their first PT test within the first 3 days of BCT and every two weeks thereafter, said 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Jack Williams of Co. C, 3rd Bn., 13th Inf. Additionally, there are mandatory road marches, from three to 15 kilometers each.

New recruits must negotiate a challenging and difficult obstacle course with obstacles like the "Slide to Victory," — a combination of cargo net, balance beam and free-fall cable ride — the "Berlin Wall," "Five Walls" and the 40-foot "Skyscraper" tower.

"They're tough because some of the trainees don't have upper-body strength," said Staff Sgt. Julio Maldonado, a drill sergeant with 2nd Bn., 39th Inf. "They have to get up and over the obstacles with each other's help, putting themselves in their buddies' hands."



In the midst of their first "duffel bag drag," recruits stand at parade rest while they wait to board buses for the trip from the reception station to their basic-training companies.

Still wearing their field gear and camouflage paint, the young troops marched smartly into formation, to the tune "I'm Proud To Be An American."

*(continued on next page)*



Trainees attack the cargo-net obstacle that begins the "Slide to Victory" event on the obstacle course.

The most challenging part of BCT is the first two weeks — the "lock-in phase" — when trainees are homesick and tired because they're not used to getting up at 5 a.m. and doing PT, or staying up late preparing for inspections, Maldonado said.

Some of them, as soon as they arrive at the reception battalion, decide they don't want to be in basic training. This is where they may spend up to five days before being shipped out to their BCT units. During that time, they get shots, fill out paperwork, get measured for uniforms and get the first taste of what it's like to accept orders.

Quickly, their connection to the civilian world is severed. They're even told what to wear while sleeping. "The PT uniform is the pajama of choice. There's no option," said Maj. John Steves, executive officer of the reception battalion, one of five reception battalions in the Army.

New soldiers are allowed to call home only once in the first 72 hours, forbidden to have candy or soft drinks, unless they've been invited to attend a concert or sports event on-post, or go off-post. But, off-post passes are usually issued only on graduation night, if family members are visiting, said Staff Sgt. Wardell Jefferson, a drill sergeant with Co. E, 1st Bn., 61st Inf.

"Trying to get along with each other is, initially, one of the hardest things they have to do," said Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Dennis Stockwell,

a drill sergeant with 3rd Bn., 13th Inf. "At first, everyone wants to be in charge. They don't realize they can get a lot more done when everyone pitches in to help."

At home, they often sat in front of the TV for long periods of time, basically doing nothing, Stockwell said. "Here, they quickly realize how important time is. And many soon appreciate the regimentation of basic training, including regular mealtimes and PT."

One recent morning, male and female



Taking an "assembly line" approach, trainees practice drill and ceremony in their company area.

soldiers from Co. C., 3rd Bn., 13th Inf., gathered inside one of the company barracks for PT, due to heavy rain and the potential danger posed by flu season.

After each exercise set, the drill sergeant yelled, "Relax," and the soldiers shouted, "Never." Then they continued the PT regimen, chanting, "One young gun, two young guns ... one-zero young guns, drill sergeant!"

"More PT, drill sergeant, more PT," they yelled. "We like it! We love it! We want more of it. Make us sweat, drill sergeant. Make us sweat!"

At about the halfway point, recruits are instructed on Basic Rifle Marksmanship, a time when they learn everything from the history of the M-16A2 rifle and its components, to how to clean it and correct malfunctions, Jefferson said.

They also learn range procedures, firing positions, safety precautions and how to take orders from the range non-commissioned officer in the lookout tower.

Fisher said trainees often have difficulty zeroing their weapons, and learning the skill and discipline to scan an area to engage targets.

To successfully complete BRM, they must hit at least 23 of 40 pop-up targets, from distances of 50 to 300 meters.

"BRM is the part of basic that really makes you feel like you're in the Army," said Pvt. Gabrielle Lloyd. "Here, we're wearing the gear and getting in the dirt.

"I started off shooting well," she added. "I thought I'd become a sharpshooter. But I haven't made the same scores two days in a row. If you look at one target too long, you start seeing doubles."

Today, new soldiers must complete 18 requirements to graduate, Campfield said.

BRM and the Army Physical Fitness Test are among them, as is completion of Victory Forge.

Because many new soldiers initially have

**"We focus on the seven core values throughout BCT, by attaching a value to every obstacle."**



New soldiers do morning PT in their platoon bay to stay out of the rain brought on by thunderstorm.

difficulty completing PT requirements, several PT tests are conducted throughout BCT to help drill sergeants identify weaknesses and help individuals prepare for the APFT, Campfield said.

During the three-day Victory Forge, recruits must be able to march about eight miles to a field-training site, where they set up defensive positions and undergo situational-training exercises that test all the skills they've learned, including common soldier tasks and leadership, Fisher said.

The exercise includes a night infiltration course that requires soldiers to crawl 200 meters through the dirt under flares and simulated M-60 machine-gun fire, said Capt. Kaci Cole, commander of Co. A., 1st Bn., 34th Inf.

On the third night they march back to garrison, to the Victory Forge rites-of-passage ceremony.

"All trainees are challenged in different ways, based on their backgrounds and abili-



New basic trainee graduates and friends pose for a picture together after the ceremony.

ties," Maldonado said. "If recruits come here and don't pass BCT, it's because they didn't want to. We're here to assure they pass. And if they need extra help, motivational training courses are offered to assure they succeed.

Pvt. Timothy Johnson of Burlington, N.C., said he questioned what he'd done during the bus ride from the reception station. "But, it isn't as horrible as I'd imagined. The toughest part is living with 50 people you've never met. At the same time, the people are the best part of BCT," said Johnson, who joined the Army to become an aircraft electrician.

Pvt. Ruben Olyano of Washington said, "The first two weeks were hard because I wasn't used to being yelled at and bossed around. After that, the drill sergeants treated us as humans."

"I'm sure they're nicer than they were in the past," Olyano said. "But they still get in your face. You'll know it if you do something wrong." By the same token, he said, "they talk and joke with us."

At 25, Pvt. Colleen Kell is older than most recruits. "It's sometimes made things more difficult for me,"

she said, "because I feel I know a lot more than some of the others."

Kell, who has a master's degree in criminal justice from the University of Central Florida, said, "Everybody calls me 'Mom.'" The soon-to-be mental health specialist hopes to complete her doctorate in forensic science.

Pvt. Derek Minnis said BCT started being a good experience after he adjusted to being told when to get up, eat, even use the latrine. "I've made lots of friends and learned that 'hooah' is a universal word with many meanings. I've learned about responsibility, too, and I think I've matured a little more."

"At graduation, parents ask the drill sergeants: 'How did you instill discipline, motivation and self-pride in my child? In 18 years, I couldn't do what you've done,'" Campfield said. Basic training gave them one immediate goal. As soldiers, the Army will give them countless opportunities to reach new ones.

[www.goarmy.com](http://www.goarmy.com)  
1-800-USA-ARMY

*This story, along with the photographs, were provided by Soldiers, The Official U.S. Army Magazine.*



The skills of bayonet fighting are practiced during intense bouts with pugil sticks. The techniques learned here are then put to practice on the Bayonet Assault Course



# ***Drill is Life***

***White gloved  
Marines master  
razor sharp  
techniques***

*Story by Cpl. Kimberly Lopez, USMC*

The Silent Drill Platoon first performed in 1948 and received such an overwhelming response that it soon became part of the routine parades in Washington, D.C.



Marines from the Silent Drill Platoon perform a movement called "a secure" where each 14 1/2-inch-long bayonet is placed within one inch of the opposite Marine's ear. (Photos courtesy of Marine Barracks Public Affairs)



The Marines demonstrate a series of calculated drill movements and precision handling of their hand-fixed bayonets. The routine concludes with a unique rifle inspection involving elaborate rifle spins and

**G**liding across the parade field like a well-oiled machine, snapping and popping, each Marine keeps time to a perfect rhythm beating inside his head. With white-gloved hands they grip their rifles, spinning and turning, razor sharp bayonets ever present, passing within inches of one another as they create this silent symphony of movement. One mis-step or hesitation could prove fatal. One error could thwart the reputation of the entire team and a legacy of more than 50 years of perfection.

The Silent Drill Platoon performs more than 200 performances a year, traveling throughout the United States and abroad, earning respect and admiration, glamour and fanfare. For these Marines, it's all part of the job.

Based at the oldest post in the Marine Corps, the "Eighth and I" barracks in Washington D.C., the Silent Drill Platoon is known as an elite team of performers who have reached the peak of perfection.

Decked out in the dress blue uniform, these 24 Marines put themselves on the spot, performance after performance, moving through a sequence of complex movements without a single command being spoken. The audience is enraptured, watching, waiting for one Marine to step out of line, for one Marine to flinch or make a wrong move. Cheers and gasps echo across the parade field as rifle toss after gravity-defying rifle toss is executed smoothly, confidently, perfectly.

These Marines may seem super-human, but they aren't. From the audience's perspective, it might look like these Marines have been drilling for their entire lives, but they haven't. For the most part, the team is made up of Marines straight from boot camp, fresh from high school.

Lance Cpl. Fidel Briones Moreno, an El Paso, Texas, native, is a 2000 graduate of Austin High School and is the youngest member of the team. This 18-year-old conquers feelings of stage fright through muscle memory, achieved and maintained through long hours of disciplined practice.

"The first feeling you get when you step off for a performance is nervousness, am I going to mess up or forget the sequence," said Moreno. "Then, as you go through the first movement, everything else blanks out and your body naturally remembers."

If you were to meet Moreno you would see a clean-cut, neatly dressed Marine with a motivated, well-spoken and positive demeanor, someone who looks like he is going places in life - completely opposite of the person he was before he joined the Marine Corps.

"During high school, all I thought about was leaving," he recalled. "I didn't care about what I became. I just lived day-to-day. I didn't have a plan. Now I look forward to what I can become. I've proved that I can accomplish something as difficult as this and it gives me

confidence, especially as a minority. I've been told that there haven't been many people from my Mexican culture [on the team], so I feel proud to be one of the few who made it."

Through the team, Moreno has had the opportunity to travel around the country.

"Since November, I've gone on the West Coast Tour and visited Yuma, Ariz., Florida and New York. Yesterday we were in Massachusetts, and tomorrow we're leaving for Seattle," he said.

Traveling so often could get lonely, but Moreno says wherever they go, the team always finds people to talk with.

"You get to make new friends every time you go somewhere. When you meet people, they treat you differently, with more respect because they know why you're there, especially the veterans. They love talking to you and hearing about the things Marines are doing now."

Not just anyone can become a member of the Silent Drill Platoon. First, there are some physical and professional requirements. Second, you have to go through a special screening process, which includes interviews.

This is where Sgt. Todd Jordan comes in. As the drillmaster, Jordan is responsible for creating the drill sequence for the team. He also interviews prospective team members to see if they have what it takes to make the cut.

"We'll ask them if they played any sports in high school," said Jordan, a Sylvania, Ga., native. "Having that extra athletic ability enhances their performance. To drill and spin a rifle, you have to be coordinated and able to do more than one thing at a time."

From the beginning of his tour with the Silent Drill Platoon in 1998, Jordan had his goal fixed on becoming the drillmaster.

"I love my job. Marines in their first year here aspire to become something, whether it's the rifle inspector or the drillmaster. I, personally, wanted to become the drillmaster because he's the one in charge. He's the one making the behind-the-scenes decisions," said Jordan.

In addition to becoming the drillmaster, Jordan also earned his White House clearance, which allows the Marine to stand with the president during appearances as a show of security and to represent the United States armed forces.

Jordan and his team also performed during seven NFL halftime shows last season for teams including the Dallas Cowboys, Philadelphia Eagles and Cleveland Browns. He's even had the chance to rub elbows with a few of the players.

"We get there a lot earlier than every one else, so we get to hang around outside the locker rooms, get autographs and stuff like that."

To be a part of the Silent Drill Platoon, you must complete Silent Drill School, three months of intensive training and drilling more than nine hours each day. At that point, drill becomes part of the team members' lives, which explains the saying, "Drill is life." The team uses this motivational chant to pump themselves up before each performance.

"The team is considered one of the best of the Marine Corps because of all the discipline it has," said Moreno. "Not everyone can be a part of it. You have to be dedicated and really want it. 'Drill is life' is worth it because you've become part of the best. All the work pays off in the end."



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# Life at Sea Aboard the USS Laboon

Story and photos by Gunnery Sgt. Lawrence Torres, USMC

“Go down and around, make a right, go through the hatch, then make a left and open the hatch again. Walk straight to the end and make a right and you will find the chief petty officer living area,” said the young sailor to a Marine who was onboard the USS Laboon for the first time. Then he asked, “Do you know how to get back?”

A Navy ship might seem confusing at first, but over time sailors discover that life aboard these military vessels is like taking the entire world and compressing it into a small town.

Everyone has a job to do and most of it revolves around living on the ocean. Those times spent away from land might seem lonely and boring, but the reality of life aboard the guided missile destroyer USS Laboon, homeported in Norfolk, Va., is completely opposite.

The ship’s gym is free and open 24 hours a day. The library has Internet capable computers. At the learning center, sailors can work on their college degrees while at sea.

“They let us bring personal games for the computers in the ships learning center,” said Fireman Samuel Moody. “Some people read or workout in the gym while I have fun with the PC. It keeps me happy living on the ship.”

Most sailors take advantage of everything offered in these learning rooms including Standard Aptitude Test study guides, college course books, audiotapes, tape players and lots of books. It is a good source for those who take college courses. During the USS Laboon’s last six-month deployment to the Persian Gulf and Mediterranean Sea, two professors from a local university taught courses on board the ship.

Another huge attraction to the learning center is e-mail. Petty Officer 1st Class Gerald Telsee said he could have used this technology years ago. The 15-year veteran used to send a letter to his wife and get a response in about two weeks. He now receives a response from his family in an hour or less.

Those messages can be sent from anywhere in the world. Family members can view every port visit during a deployment with the click of a button.

Seaman Chanita Davis recently finished high school and can’t wait to make that first cruise and tell her loved ones, “Look where I am today.

“I joined the Navy to travel, earn money for college and meet new people,” said Davis, a native of Chicago. “I want to go to Bahrain because I heard a lot of good things about it.”

Some sailors who have been in the Navy for a few years said they didn’t need to travel to meet people from different countries. Petty Officer 3rd Class Maria Hernandez said she had a taste of this culture combination in boot camp.

“I have met a lot of people from Jamaica, Honduras, Africa and Brazil who are in the U.S. Navy,” said Hernandez. “You start talking and find out they are the same with the same struggles.”

Those without families live on the ship or near the base, but when the ship is at sea everyone has a their own four-by-seven foot home, or berthing. One USS Laboon berthing holds 24 people with bunks stacked three high. Each bunk has two drawers used for storing personal items. The small living area makes

some sailors feel like they are living on a college campus, only on this campus they get paid.

“It’s basically more of a dorm atmosphere,” said Hernandez, who has been in the Navy for three years. “A majority of the Sailors now live off of the ship, and live here when we are out to sea.”

Along with benefits come daily work responsibilities. Each sailor’s expertise is necessary every day the ship is at sea. One miscommunication or job failure could slow the progress of the ship.

“I monitor air and surface contacts and search for enemy targets,” said Petty Officer 3rd Class Jamie Ulrich, a missile system supervisor. “There is a lot of responsibility here. I could deploy any one of our anti-air missiles upon command.”

Sailors receive training and experience, travel the world, make new friends and can earn college degrees all while at sea. Every young sailor experiences new circumstances and responsibilities. However, all of the daytime rituals of life at sea come to a close aboard the USS Laboon with the time-honored tradition of the evening prayer.

“Give us peace, protection and safety in our coming and going,” prayed Petty Officer 2nd Class Jayson Williams over USS Laboon’s loudspeaker at 10 p.m. “Let us return home better than when we left with nothing lost.”

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(Background) The USS Laboon, her crew manning the rails, heads down the Hudson River going under the Verrazano Bridge at the start of Fleet Week 2001.



Petty Officer 3rd Class Luis Canales from Boston, Mass., works out in one of three weight rooms.



Seaman Chanita Davis from Chicago, Ill., finds time to read a book in her bunk aboard the USS Laboon.



Ensign Laura Cosmas from Fanwood, N.J., communicates with sailors aboard ship while on the bridge of the USS Laboon.



# Heavy Training

**A** C-17 Globemaster crew prepares for a training mission, while a C-5 performs approaches at Altus Air Force Base, Okla. This C-17, assigned to the 62nd Airlift Wing at McCord Air Force Base, Wash., was on loan to Altus to fly training missions. Altus trains aircrew members for the C-5, C-17, C-141 and KC-135.

*(See story on next page)*





## Altus provides vital link in America's global reach

**S**tanding in the shadow of one of the free world's largest airplanes, Kyle Melaas is in shock. Eyes wide, mouth agape, this 20-year-old airman ogles the plane like it's a Lamborghini. This is his first up-close look at the jet he'll call home for at least the next four years — the C-5 Galaxy.

"I could fit my whole hometown on it," Melaas says, only half joking. "I didn't realize it had an upstairs."

The young man stops talking and turns to watch another C-5 lumber down Altus Air Force Base's runway. A sly smile creeps across the airman's face as he watches the "big bubba" claw its way into the southwestern Oklahoma sky. The ground trembles under his feet. Melaas likes what he sees.

"I can't wait to be a part of it," he said.

But first he'll have to make his way through Altus' two-month C-5 loadmaster course. This airman, just a month out of basic training, who couldn't pack his suitcase before he left home, will leave Altus ready to pack up that C-5 and travel around the world.

Turning young men and women like Melaas into combat ready crew members is Altus' mission. It's heavy training.

The base, tucked in the bottom left corner of Oklahoma, churns out more than 2,900 aircrew members a year. Students include pilots, navigators, flight engineers, loadmasters and boom operators. Stroll down the flight line and it's a "who's who" of heavy aircraft — C-5s, C-17s, KC-135s and even a few, soon to be retired, C-141 Star-lifters.

"We run 57 aircrew training courses ranging from initial qualification to senior officer training," said Brig. Gen. Quentin L. Peterson, 97th Air Mobility Wing commander. "We're the hub that trains combat ready aircrews for America's strategic air mobility."

The wing, which belongs to Air Education and Training Command, is big business on the Oklahoma plains. Its five flying squadrons have some of the most experienced instructors in the Air Force, and Team Altus knows its mission and takes pride in its product.

### Critical link

"Without us, the line shuts down," said Staff Sgt. Al Davis, a C-141 flight engineer instructor with the 57th Airlift Squadron. The "line" Davis refers to is Air Mobility Command's constant, massive effort to move cargo and people around the world. In Air Force terminology, it's known as global reach or rapid global mobility.

Davis knows the demands and rigors of the line. He spent seven years flying the line at McChord Air Force Base, Wash., before volunteering for instructor duty at Altus.

"We take pride in what we do," Davis said. "The questions I always ask myself before a student graduates are, 'Do I want this guy to go fly with my friends?'"

Davis' questions cut to the core of the wing's diverse training mission.

How do you train the crews needed to fill Air Force vacancies and still fly safe? Simple. Hire the best instructors the Air Force has to offer.

"We put a lot of responsibility on our instructors' shoulders," said Col. Michelle Johnson, 97th Operations Group commander. "They take these big planes out there and fly them at 270 mph, practicing with student operators, boomers and loads, and they respond to the challenge. They're amazing."

More amazing is the wing's safety record. The wing flies 29,000 hours a year — about 6,000 individual aircraft missions. Yet, it maintains one of the best safety records in its command. This is possible for several reasons, but the biggest is the wing's reliance on its time-tested, three-phase training process: books first, simulators next, and flying last.

### By the numbers

Before wanna-be crewmembers ever set foot in an aircraft they must master the textbooks and "sims." Civilian contractors provide the



(Opposite page and above, left) Crew members and pilots train in a C-5 simulator. (Above, right) Keeping the student aircrew pipeline flowing smoothly is a demanding job, but "repetition is the key to airpower," said Col. Michelle Johnson, 97th Operations Group commander. Airman Basic Kyle Melaas practices repetition on a C-5 simulator under the watchful eye of Charlie Cousins, a C-5 loadmaster instructor with Flight Safety Services Corp.

first two phases of training. Boeing trains C-17 crews and Flight Safety Services Corp. trains the wing's other aircrews.

Students spend an average of 30 days in the books. Boom operators have the longest course — 105 days, 36 of which are spent in the books. And the senior officer training course is the shortest — just four days.

After peeling their noses out of the books, students move on to state-of-the-art simulators. The wing has 12 contractor-operated static and full-motion simulators. Step into one of these trainers and you'd swear you're on a flight deck. These puppies are cool — complete with computer generated visual systems — they feel like the real deal.

Simulators play a big role in training. They're cheap to run and cost much less than flying real missions. Why? No fuel and low maintenance costs. They're also a great way for students to get familiar with the airplane and learn emergency procedures.

"The sims can't replace flying, but they're close," Johnson said.

After students successfully complete training in the simulators, they move on to the final phase - check rides. Flying training belongs to the active duty Air Force instructors. Students fly a number of training flights and then must pass an evaluation flight to qualify in the aircraft.

Capt. Mark Boyd, a C-17 student pilot, is just two flights away from completing the aircraft commander initial qualification course. He's enjoyed his time learning to fly the Globemaster III.

"It's a great jet, and I can't wait to qualify on it," Boyd said. "It's been a long, tough course. I miss my family and I'm ready to head to McChord (his next assignment)."

For Boyd, the check ride is fast approaching. Airman 1st Class Shyla Gordon isn't so lucky. Gordon is in day 35 of the KC-135 boom operator course. She's almost finished with her academic block and freely admits coffee and caffeine are the only reasons she's made it this far.

"I don't consider myself mechanically inclined," Gordon said.

"The book work is intensive, and it's been a challenge. But things are starting to click."

### Making it click

Turning that light bulb on, or making things click, like in Gordon's case, is what motivates the instructors.

"I thought I was a good instructor before I got here," said Capt. Erik Olinger, a C-5 instructor pilot. Olinger has 3,200 hours in the C-5 and was a standardization and evaluation pilot at Travis Air Force Base, Calif., before moving to teach at Altus. "I'm a rookie. Some of these guys have 6,000 hours. To listen to them, watch them, and learn how they work has been great. It's made me a better pilot and a better instructor."

That attitude — finding better ways to teach — permeates the base. Team Altus equips crew members for their first operational missions.

"We give 'em the basics," Olinger said. "When they leave here they know how to fly safe, and know what's going on. We tell them it takes time to learn the AMC system. Stay in the books, find people who know the system and learn everything you can from them. That's how they become better." Sound advice.

Melaas will get the same advice when he finishes loadmaster school and heads off to Travis to fly the world. Who knows, maybe after a few years on the line he'll make his way back to the heartland. And it'll be his turn to greet wide-eyed airmen and show them the ins and outs of being an aircrew member. It would be his chance to carry on the Altus legacy of heavy training.

**Story by Master Sgt. Jim Greeley, USAF, Photos by Tech. Sgt. John Lasky, USAF**

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# Taking charge of his destiny

## A high-school dropout joins the Coast Guard and turns his life around

Story by Lt. Christopher Hollingshead, USCG

### How do you spell “opportunity?”

Retired Lt. Cmdr. Roger Mason claims it’s spelled “U-S-C-G.”

Mason, who recently left the service after 26 years of active duty, is a living testimony of combining effective mentoring and leadership with motivation and ambition to create the right chemistry for individual success.

While some people find life accommodating and full of options, Mason, as a high school dropout, had to work hard to make life work for him the way he wanted.

Without a diploma or many prospects for success, he left his home in Mississippi in 1974 to join the Coast Guard.

After boot camp, he completed a school to become an administrative assistant or “Yeoman” and, like many young men and women, went to his first duty station with the rank of petty officer. It was there, according to Mason, that a young junior officer took him under his wing, persuaded him to earn his graduation equivalency diploma, and encouraged him to start taking college courses at night.



Mason’s 1974 boot camp photo.

“He saw something in me that I didn’t see at the time ... but, more importantly, he took time out of his busy schedule to encourage a young man to get focused,” said Mason.

The mentoring provided by those who took a personal interest in Mason started to take root. Another duty station later, Mason had enough credits to earn his associate’s degree. After another transfer and more night classes, he finally gained enough credit hours to earn a bachelor’s degree from the University of

San Francisco.

Besides furthering his education, Mason also worked his way up the advancement ladder to the rank of senior chief petty officer within 12 years of his enlistment.

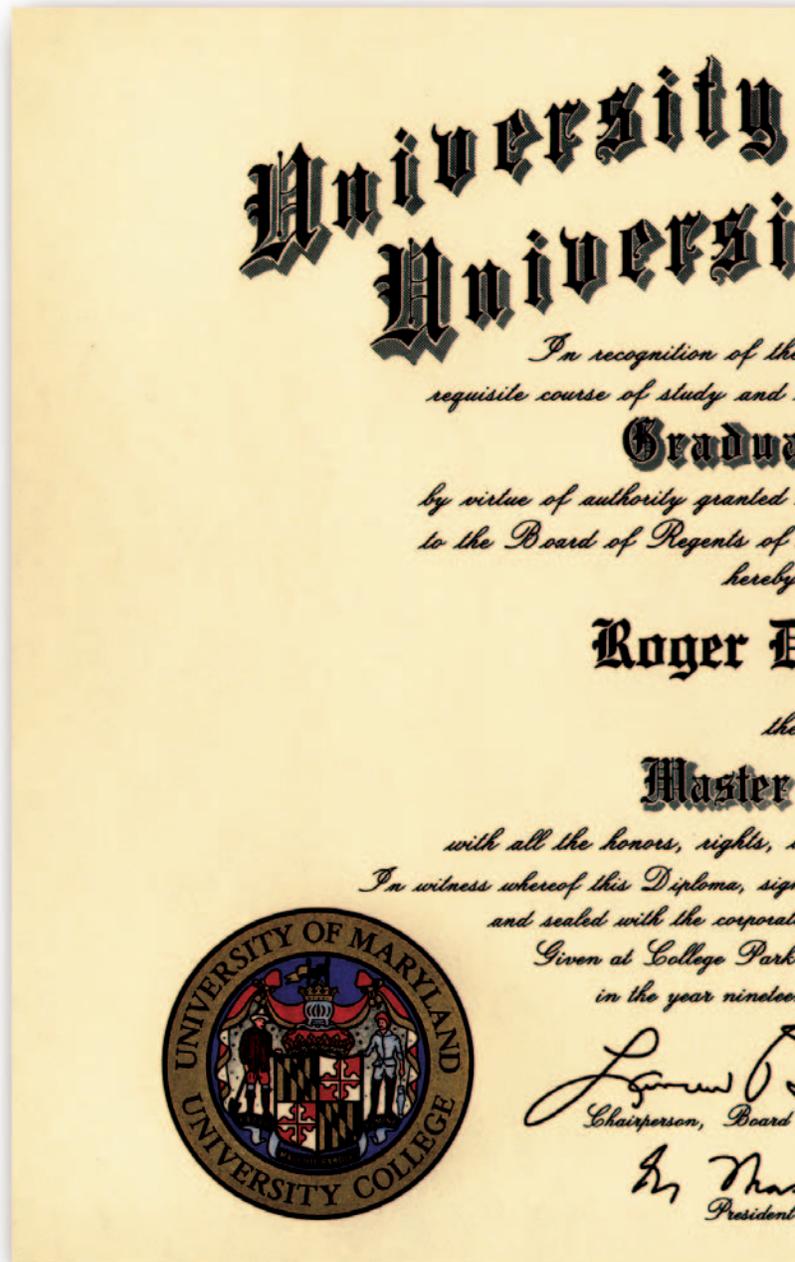
“The lesson I want everyone to learn,” said Mason, “is that you can influence someone’s life. I will always be indebted to the junior officers who helped me in the beginning for their encouragement and

support along my educational path. I have tried to follow their lead by encouraging those I come in contact with to get their education.”

The story doesn’t stop there. Mason became a chief warrant officer, and was later selected for a program which allows warrant officers to become commissioned officers. Mason was soon serving as a lieutenant in the U.S. Coast Guard.

After earning his bachelor’s degree on his own time, Mason applied and was accepted to attend the University of Maryland for full-time graduate studies in human resource management — paid for by the Coast Guard. He earned a master’s degree upon completion of his studies there.

Mason’s formula for success is much like that of the thousands



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n hundred and ninety-four.

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*Nicholas ...*  
Dean



Mason gets a plaque and a parting handshake from Rear Adm. Robert C. Olson, Jr., director of Personnel management, during his retirement ceremony at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Telfair Brown)

who have taken advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Coast Guard. For everyone who has succeeded, there is always a variation of the path Mason took to reach his goals. For those just beginning their journey to success, Mason has condensed his thoughts into the following simple words:

- “The decisions you make today will influence your future — so look ‘long-term’ at the decisions you make today and try to determine the impact they will have on your future.”
- “The Coast Guard provides many opportunities to enhance your personal growth; however, it is up to you to act on those opportunities.”
- “It’s important to know things. However, as my kids have heard

me say many times, ‘It’s not what you know; it’s what you do with what you know.’ Applying your knowledge to a common good is important.”

Mason’s penchant for taking advantage of opportunities that were available to him continued beyond his promotion to lieutenant commander, obtaining a master’s degree, and retirement from active duty. He put his education and experience to work for him to compete for and to obtain a high-level position as a federal civilian employee — still working with the Coast Guard.

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(Above) Combat controller Tech. Sgt. Brad Walker, 21st Special Tactics Squadron, Pope Air Force Base, N.C., watches a C-17 Globemaster take off from one of many dirt runways at Fort Bragg, N.C. A typical day for a combat controller might include skydiving from an airplane, setting up a landing strip and then guiding aircraft into it. (Photo by Seaman Rusty Black)

(Below) Petty Officer 3rd Class Brent N. Christiansen from Fullerton, Neb., updates the status board located in flight deck control aboard USS John C. Stennis. Christiansen is the nightwatch control talker and responsible for directing fuel crews to appropriate aircraft in the hangar bays and on the flight deck. (Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Fletcher, USN)

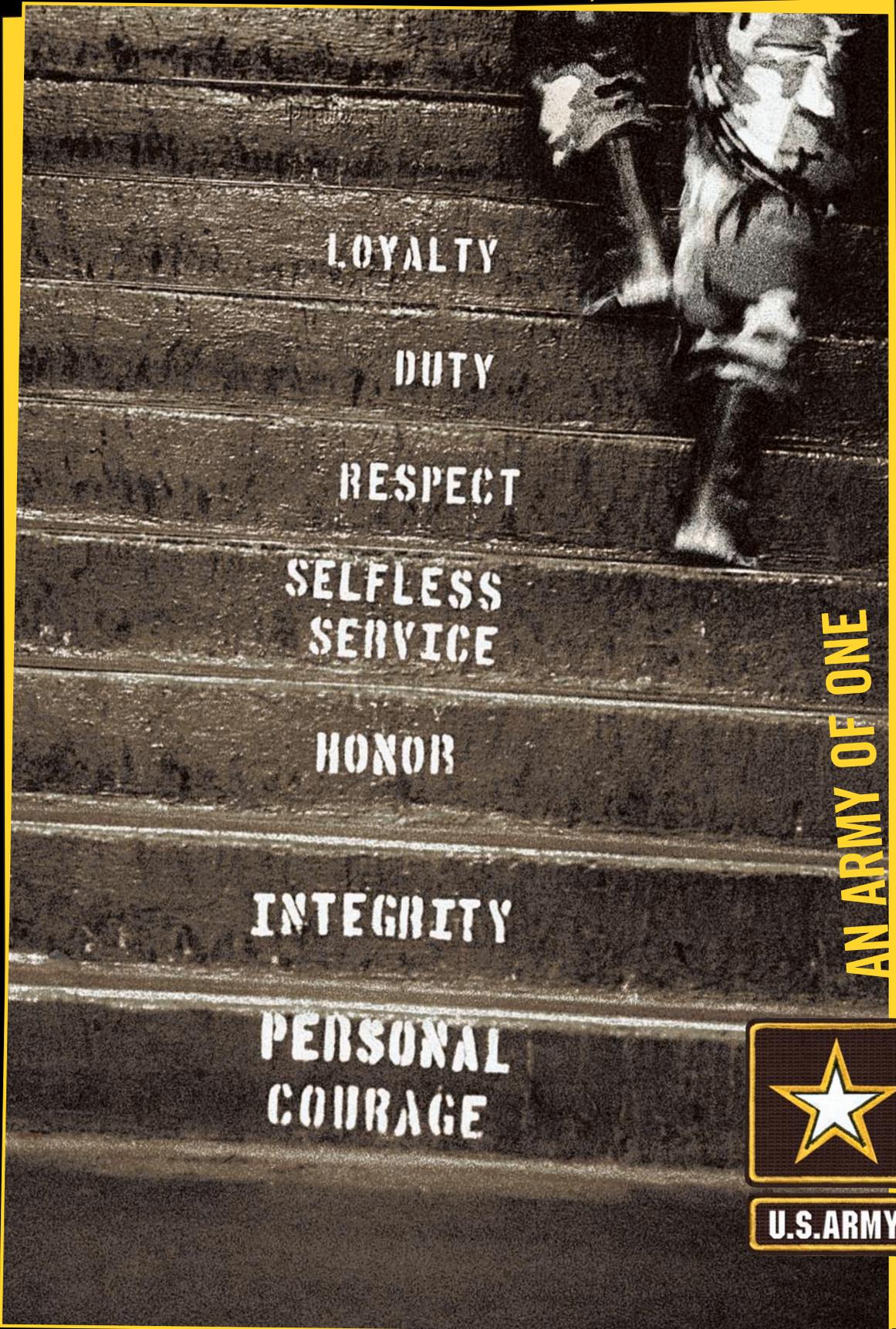




(Above) Seaman April Greggs from Decatur, Ga., plots the ship's course while on watch on the bridge aboard USS John F. Kennedy. Even in this era of Global Positioning System (GPS) hardware, the navigation team still keeps track of the ship's position on various charts. (Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Natalie J. Nolen, USN)  
(Below) Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Cassandra Peacock maneuvers station New London's 47-foot rescue boat into position on the Thames River as an Air Station Cape Cod HH-60 Jayhawk helicopter crew prepares to practice basket hoists with Peacock's smallboat crew. This search and rescue demonstration is one of many activities that take place during graduation week at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn. (Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Dave French, USCG)



Staff Sgt. Calvin Garrett. Drill Sergeant. AN ARMY OF ONE.<sup>SM</sup> In the United States Army.



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