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The Early Years of Air Force Basic Military Training (1939-1952)

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FOREWORD

I originally wanted to write a paper about Air Force basic training and give a brief sampling of what basic training was like in the early years (around WWII), through the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and what it's like now, in 1994. Once I started researching the subject, though, I found my desire too broad, so I've narrowed the subject from just prior to WWII through 1952, and conclude with a few comments about trainees and instructors' attitudes in 1955.

I also hoped to include material about women in the Air Force (WAF programs) and more about minority members in the Air Force, but these subjects would really require separate papers. Lack of mention of much material about women and minority members isn't an intentional discount of their history and contributions.

I am very appreciative of the staff of the Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center at Maxwell AFB, Alabama, for their assistance in helping me locate the materials for this project.

Many thanks to the Unit Historians for preparing such interesting and well written histories. It would have been impossible for me to write this if not for them.

BASIC TRAINING PRIOR TO 7 DECEMBER 1941

Would the United States enter the war, or would the country avoid it? Feelings seemed to be mixed before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Even so, many lawmakers and some of the general public recognized the need to build up the armed forces. To make sure there was an ample supply of men, Congress passed the Selective Service Act of 16 September 1940 (the draft).

The US Air Force, as we know it today, didn't exist. That wouldn't come until later, in 1947. Instead, the Air Force was an arm of the US Army, known as the US Army Air Corps, and during the war, it became the US Army Air Force.

The need for airplanes and men to fly and fix them was becoming more apparent each day, but to the service's senior leaders, solving that problem was complex. How does a country go about transforming civilians into soldiers, capable of servicing airplanes and other jobs that go along with it, rapidly, smoothly, and efficiently? Basic Training was the answer, but not a simple answer.

Before Pearl Harbor Day (7 December 1941), the Army had 29 Reception Centers and 21 Replacement Training Centers. Recruits were sent to the reception centers for initial processing. Following short stays at the reception centers, the recruits were sent to "replacement" centers to learn the fundamentals of military life. Following their training at one of the replacement centers, they went to tactical units to receive their actual combat training. (3:305)

Despite bad weather, and shortages of material, these reception centers were constructed and were operational during the winter and spring of 1940-41. In fact, US Army Chief of Staff George Marshall described them as a new and "eminently satisfactory method" of transforming civilians into soldiers. (3:305)

Talk about Air Force basic training, and most of today's Air Force enlisted people will think of Lackland AFB in San Antonio, Texas. But that didn't come until later. The Army Air Corps' (AAC) first Replacement Training Center was at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, where trainees said "...the mud was always knee-deep, even in the summer." (14:14) It opened for basic training 3 September 1940. (3:331-A)

Before Jefferson Barracks began to accept recruits, though, the AAC was already busy deciding what basic training should consist of. The Air Corps Morale Board recommended basic training should be "A well rounded-out program for the initial training of recruits, which will have as its objective not only the usual one of perfecting this training and instruction within the limits of the period allowed, but also developing at the start a consciousness of the principles of leadership." (3:315)

The Air Corps Morale Board was also concerned about the quality of instructors because "The recruit receives his most lasting impressions from the acts and omissions of his seniors. The older soldiers are his models; he looks to them for his cue in all things..." (3:315)

There were other decisions to make. One was just how long basic training should be. The Air Corps Morale Board felt four to six weeks, minimum, would be sufficient. The Board also directed emphasis be given to a full schedule which would include training, athletics, and instruction, but avoid fatiguing drills and monotonous tasks. (3:316)

Another concern was the curriculum. The Air Corps needed to decide how much time should be spent on learning the traditional infantry drill; after all, the AAC needed technicians to service airplanes. But the Air Corps Morale Board felt drill was almost indispensable: "Insistence upon...drill provides an invaluable means of securing prompt obedience and physical control." (3:316)

The solution: A program of shorter duration than which the infantry members would go through; make soldiers quickly to prepare them to move on to technical schools. The course would include teaching recruits obedience to orders, military courtesy and discipline, personal hygiene, and sanitation. (3:316)

Jefferson Barracks became the center where the ideas of how basic training should be conducted were tested for the Technical Training Command. Success in Jefferson's programs often led to Keesler Field in Mississippi, and Sheppard Field in Texas, adopting many of Jefferson's policies. (3:329)

The AAC finally decided three to four weeks was the proper length for basic training, but there was uncertainty, still, as to what subjects, and what depth, they should be taught. Unfortunately, there was pressure to fill technical school quotas as the need for men increased with the tensions of the world scene; many men had to leave the replacement centers before they could complete basic training. A temporary solution was to have overseas replacement training centers the men would attend before they were sent into a combat setting. (3:329)

AIR FORCE BASIC TRAINING DURING WORLD WAR II

When the Japanese Empire attacked Pearl Harbor, the AAC had three basic training centers in operation: Jefferson Barracks, Keesler Field, and Sheppard Field, where "...trainees tromped in the mud in the morning, but by afternoon had dust blowing in their eyes..." (Quote from 14:14, also see 3:331)

By the spring of 1943, when the number of men in basic training reached the highest it would, there were 12 basic training centers in operation. (3:331)

Basic training center locations would include, besides the three mentioned above, two in Miami Beach, Florida; Kearns, Utah; St Petersburg, Florida; Atlantic City, New Jersey; Fresno, California; Greensboro, North Carolina; Goldsboro, North Carolina; Gulfport Field, Mississippi; Amarillo AAF, Texas; Lincoln AAF, Nebraska, "...the ice-box of the mid-west" (14:14); and Buckley Field, Colorado. (3:331-A)

The "Miami Beach Plan" was quite different from the traditional basic training approach. Recruits were quartered in luxurious beach front hotels instead of traditional barracks. General Weaver, the father of the "Miami Beach Plan," felt the plan was necessary and practical: time and material (critical war items) would be saved, the semi-tropical climate would be ideal for year-round training, sunny beaches would be ideal for physical training, and the golf courses ideal for conducting drill. (3:332)

Atlantic City didn't have the ideal conditions like Miami. Even though it had resort hotels, winter temperatures and winds caused major dust storms. Nonetheless, the AAC conducted basic training there from 29 June 1942 until August 1943. (3:331, 333)

No matter where the recruits went for basic training, there were many activities they participated in to turn them into soldiers. The first major activity was "processing."

Processing occurred during the first four to six days following arrival at a basic training center. The recruits listened to lectures, viewed films, took tests, and received a general orientation. Their commanders were also directed to welcome them. An Atlantic City Headquarters order stated: "All recruits are entitled to a well presented inspirational talk by their squadron commanding officer. This should be given on the first or second day after arrival, in the form of a welcome, and should include an explanation of the training about to be received." (3:353)

During processing, the recruits listened to lectures about Articles of War, Military Courtesy, Sex Hygiene, War Bonds, and National Life Insurance. When not attending lectures, they were involved in other activities: blood typing, receiving immunizations, drilling, and issuance of uniform and personal items. (3:354)

Once preliminary processing activities were out of the way, the most important processing activity was classification; the classification process determined what job the recruit would pursue. Recruits would be given tests and interviews; results determined what they would do following basic training. The recruits were divided into three classes: (1) those scheduled for technical school, (2) by-passed specialists going directly to their jobs, and (3) all others. (3:355)

Not everyone believed it was a perfect system. Lt Col James W. Hill, former classification officer for AAFTTC (Army Air Force Technical Training

Command) noted possible problems with tests i.e. they were often given at night following inoculations and at the end of long, tiring train trips. He noted there seemed to be less attention paid to classification activities than paid to issuing shoes and uniforms. (3:366)

The techniques and facilities for basic training varied. The drill instructor and the recruits might be seen drilling on city streets, golf courses, or even farms. (3:367)

Specially selected enlisted men or drill instructors usually conducted the required lectures. General Weaver (father of the "Miami Beach Plan") discouraged long lectures; he felt they should never exceed 30 minutes, and emphasis should be placed on getting the recruits involved through practical instruction. He gave an example of what he meant: "...[The] punishment of a sentinel found guilty of falling asleep on post, and the military procedures by which his punishment is fixed, should be simulated in the presence of the recruit." (3:368)

It's interesting to note that today, most Air Force members have received some form of chemical warfare training, which if not actually being issued a gas mask, usually involves at least familiarity with one. That wasn't the case for basic trainees at the beginning of WWII. There was little emphasis on chemical warfare training until late 1942 and early 1943. The disinterest and apathy towards the subject seems to have been caused by the older Army men. Some felt because there was little use of toxic gasses in the first world war, there would be little threat in WWII because the United Nations forces had gained air superiority in most combat theatres. (3:374)

Once chemical warfare training was emphasized, recruits not only attended lectures about it, they were issued gas masks and went into gas chambers to see how the masks worked. There were also "Gas Alert Days" when base people were required to carry their masks with them at all times because drill fields, offices, or warehouses were sprayed with tear gas without warning. (3:375)

Making chemical warfare training even more impressive was the instructors themselves. They would put a pin-point amount of mustard agent on their own hands so the recruits could witness what happened to the instructors' hands. (3:375,376)

And to make sure everyone could understand chemical warfare and its dangers, the Army developed comic books with two fictional characters: Sgt Fang and Pvt. B. Fuddle. (3:375)

There was a problem with the gas mask training in Atlantic City, though. In the winter of 1943, the gas masks froze to trainees' faces, and could only be removed through much pain to the trainees. (3:375)

Beside processing, classification, lectures, and chemical warfare, trainees needed to participate in physical conditioning. On 3 June 1942, Colonel Clifford L. Brownell, Director of the Physical Fitness Section of AAFTTC, issued T.T. Circular No. 9, which increased the emphasis of physical fitness for recruits. The concerns were that the recruits had previously had a soft existence, and success in war would require strong, alert bodies, willing to overcome enemies. (3:376)

T.T. Circular No. 9 described the physical training program. One hour per day for six days each week was considered the minimum time necessary to get good results. It also suggested the program include marching and singing,

conditioning exercises, athletics, aquatics, combative sports, and tumbling. (3:377)

The fitness program was eventually refined by taking into account the different ages of the men in basic training to prevent injuries and undue strain. (3:378)

Colonel Brownell felt a man had to "give until it hurts" (3:378) for the conditioning process to do any good. To motivate the recruits, drill instructors used many methods, such as two minute "pep talks" on the value of physical fitness, and pictures of Hitler and Mussolini placed throughout obstacle courses. (3:378)

In today's military, it's not unusual to see people of different races, backgrounds, men and women alike, as part of what's normal and taken for granted in the service. Unfortunately, it hasn't always been this way; during WWII, it wasn't.

Jefferson Barracks received its first black recruits in the fall of 1942. Rumors Jefferson Barracks would be converted into an all black base caused strong opposition from nearby civic leaders in St. Louis. (3:402,403)

The Office of the Chief of the Air Corps called attention to paragraph 3 of Army Regulation 600-10 to help avoid problems. The regulation required officers, when dealing with enlisted men, to realize "...the absolute necessity of so treating them as to preserve their self-respect." Commanders were to "avoid all practices tending to give the colored [emphasis is mine] soldier cause to feel that the Army makes any differentiation between him and any other soldier." (3:402)

Despite guidance received, officials decided to adopt a policy of strict segregation at Jefferson Barracks. They even established a special classification section for black recruits. Except for the officer in charge, the units were staffed by all black people. The "black" sections of the base were equipped with Service Clubs, theatres, and exchanges. There were special dances, parties, and entertainment, specifically for black recruits. (3:403)

Essentially, the training program was the same as that for white trainees. A somber note is that the prevailing view held at Jefferson Barracks was that "due to their temperament they [black recruits] did not absorb training as rapidly as whites and that therefore their instructors should have exceptional patience." (3:403)

BASIC MILITARY TRAINING, 1946-1948

Even though there was rapid demobilization after V-J Day in 1945, the Army Air Force still had very high accessions. From January through June 1946, there were 96,861 students who graduated from basic training. The Army Air Forces Military Training Center (later known as Lackland AFB) in San Antonio was originally designated to house all basic training activities. The production load described above made it impossible to conduct all basic training in San Antonio, so it was conducted at five additional locations: Amarillo Army Air Field, Texas; Buckley Field, Colorado; Keesler Field, Mississippi; Sheppard Field, Texas; and Scott Field, Illinois. (5:134)

Again, concern over black recruits was causing problems. While Sheppard Field was saturated with basic trainees, controversy was heating up between black and white people over the use of recreational facilities; there were no facilities for black people on or off the base. (5:135)

Headquarters, Technical Training Command suggested, and higher headquarters approved (on 18 March 1946) that all basic training for black recruits be at Scott Field, because "there were negro populations easily accessible to the field, and therefore opportunity for outside recreation." (5:135)

In early June, 1946, actions were taken to consolidate all basic training activities to the AAF Military Training Center, in the interest of economy and efficiency. (5:136)

In 1946, the quality of students was an issue. Estimates indicated that not more than 60 percent of the white trainees, and not more than 30 percent of the black trainees were qualified for technical schools. This was due to many things. Most of the people undergoing training were 18 to 25 years old. More than 10 percent were 18 year olds who were "...thoroughly unaccustomed to regimentation and responsibility, and who had little practical experience and no interest in the army as a career." (5:136)

During the same period, AWOLs and courts-martial cases rose out of proportion to the number of trainees. Quality of recruits seems to have declined, because "The...trainees...,because of their low I.Q. [sic] and their educational, personal, and environmental backgrounds, were far inferior to the men who made up the wartime army." (5:137)

Trying to solve the problem of quality and motivation, and help the airmen transition smoothly to military life, the Information and Education Division of Headquarters, Army and Air Force, developed a "troop information program kit." Inside was information, in nine units, about why the airman was in the service, basic facts about the Army and Air Force, organization and function of the services, traditions, and benefits. (5:137,138)

One problem facing the AAF was the quality and qualifications of basic training instructors. Many of the more experienced instructors had recently been separated from the service or transferred. Many new instructors had themselves just completed basic training, were about 18 years old, and hadn't even completed high school. Many were unable to cope with instructor duty and were transferred to other jobs. (5:138,139)

While the military was busy demobilizing during this post-war period, Air Training Command was directed to reduce basic training from nine weeks to six weeks to speed the training process. On 16 January 1946, the new six week

program was designed, and was to go into effect not later than 16 February 1946.

This is what the new 240 hour basic training course looked like:

| <u>SUBJECT</u> | <u>HOURS</u> |
|--|--------------|
| Marksmanship | 54 |
| Marches and Bivouac | 40 |
| Physical Training | 30 |
| Medical Aid | 23 |
| Close Order Drill | 14 |
| Interior Guard Duty | 10 |
| Camouflage | 9 |
| Army Orientation | 7 |
| <u>Parades, Ceremonies, Retraining, Overtime ...</u> | <u>23</u> |
| Total | 210 |

The remaining 30 hours were set aside for instruction in the Articles of War, Organization of the Army, Military Discipline, Care of Clothing and Equipment, Safeguarding Military Information, Elementary Map and Aerial Photograph Reading, and Night Operations. (5:140)

Some airmen weren't able to "benefit" from the reduced course length. Trainees not qualified for technical school received an additional two weeks of basic training; a War Department directive required recruits to have at least eight weeks training before shipment overseas. This additional training consisted of additional hours of physical training, army orientation, close order drill, civil disturbances, care of clothing and equipment, camouflage, maps and aerial photographs, practice marches, orientation to occupational duty, and open time. (5:140,141)

A significant "first" happened on 4-5 June 1946. For the first time since the AAF began its own basic training, representatives from basic training centers conferred at Technical Training Command to revise basic training. This conference marked the first time people involved in conducting training could actually give their opinions as to what was good and what was lacking in the training program. (5:141)

The conferees determined a primary training fault of the AAF basic training program was the trainees' lack of esprit de corps. They decided to devote 35 hours of the program to subjects devoted to make airmen proud to be members of the Army Air Forces. Unfortunately, even though they made excellent proposals, none of them were adopted then. (5:141,142)

By June, 1946, the flow of students had diminished enough to consolidate all basic training at the Indoctrination Division, Air Training Command (IDTRC) at San Antonio, Texas (location later named Lackland AFB). This became effective 1 July 1946, although there were still a few black recruits at Scott Field, Illinois, completing their basic training. (4:230)

The usefulness and quality of basic training was suspect because "It was realized that the existing program was lacking in features necessary to adequately train recruits..."(4:237)

Due to these concerns, the Indoctrination Division recommended lengthening the course to 12 weeks, effective 29 July 1946. The revised course was to place more emphasis on organization of the AAF, indoctrination

of AAF ground personnel, training films, and marksmanship. Also to be included in the revised course would be new material for the recruits' benefit: overseas duty orientation, Navy organization, grenade and booby trap handling, counterintelligence, and airdrome defense. (4:237,238)

In spite of these efforts to improve basic training, the plan went on "hold" on 25 July 1946; four days before its beginning. The reason for stopping before even beginning it was not because of any doubts as to its usefulness, but rather, logistical problems. With a 12-week program, the Indoctrination Division would only be able to accommodate a student load of 6,500. In July, 1946, the student entries had already reached 9,000 that month. (4:238)

General Thomas C. Darcy, Assistant Chief of Staff, A-3, Air Training Command, proposed a plan similar to the current Delayed Enlistment Program to assure a stable, but manageable flow of recruits. Because it was difficult to project student entry rates, he felt applicants should be backlogged until space was available for them in basic training. It's interesting to note his plan wasn't acted on then, but when the draft ended in the 1970s, the Delayed Enlistment Program proved to be, and continues to be, a valuable recruiting tool. (4:238,239)

Finally, the course was lengthened to eight weeks (instead of twelve weeks) on 3 March 1947. This decision was reached after differences of opinion were resolved between the Indoctrination Division and Air Training Command. The Indoctrination Division had proposed a six week course with an additional two weeks of continuation training (essentially a review of previously covered material); Air Training Command wanted a course which wouldn't repeat previously covered material. (4:239,240)

Between April and June, 1948, basic training was revised in three ways. The first revision was adding four hours to physical training (PT). This posed a concern to the physical training instructors, who weren't in favor of changing it. With the revision, games were added to the program; as a result, instructors needed to be familiar with rules of games, and acted as referees and umpires, rather than just conducting calisthenics. The trainees seemed to have been satisfied with the new PT program, though, as "Only a few trainees complained that they were receiving insufficient [physical] conditioning." (7:10)

The second refinement was the inauguration of "Interior Guard," the forerunner of today's "Dormitory Guard." Trainees carried carbines with the firing pins removed for safety. Officials noted the increased military bearing, neatness, and alertness of trainees performing the interior guard duty. (7:11)

The third refinement to the program was addition of a competitive award system (forerunner to today's Honor Flights). Launched as an experiment, training functions were awarded merits or demerits for every phase of training activity. These functions included parades, drill competition, sports, administrative work, and venereal disease (VD) and AWOL (absent without leave) rates. Plans were made to make the competitive award system permanent if the experiment was successful. (7:11)

During this same period (1 April-30 June 1948), officials expressed concerns for the shortage of training aids, a "bottleneck" in the program. (4:12) Though officials requested the needed training films through normal channels, they weren't successful in obtaining them. So deep was their

concern over this, two officers went to Air Training Command Headquarters (then at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana) to discuss the issue. The films subsequently began arriving, albeit slowly. Lieutenant F. Covey, then the Assistant Training Aids Officer, told the Base Historian that "We have a shortage of everything but work." (7:12)

By July 1, 1948, basic training was extended to 13 weeks (520 training hours). The trainees underwent five phases of training at Lackland AFB:

1. Orientation-61 hours
2. Physical Health Development-80 hours
3. Military Science and Tactics-215 hours
4. Sanitation and Hygiene-27 hours
5. Elementary Aeronautics-19 hours

There were also a few more activities for the recruits: kitchen police (KP), 62 hours; psychological testing, 16 hours; and inspections and processing activities, 40 hours. (12:13,14)

What did the daily routine of the recruits involve? What was their reception at Lackland AFB like? Former Commanding Officer, Colonel Malcolm W. Stewart, gives us some ideas, based on a letter he sent to parents of each recruit (summarized below). (12:Appendix A)

At Lackland's Shipping and Receiving Section, approximately 50 minutes were required to transition the civilian to an airman "assembly line style." This included an official base welcome including coffee and doughnuts (provided by the Red Cross), quick medical and dental check-ups, shots, haircuts, issue of soap and towels, showering, uniform issues, and transportation to the training squadrons.

The airmen would undergo 65 training days, each eight hours long. Of the 520 total hours, 480 hours were spent either in the classroom or in field training. Some of the subjects were Military Security, First Aid, Polar Survival, and instruction by medical personnel about intestinal and respiratory disease, and with the chaplain's help, a course on VD prevention.

Trainees also received camouflage training in a large combat theatre demonstration area. Further combat instruction included ten hours devoted to defense against chemical attacks; during this training, the recruits would actually be exposed to tear gas with and without their gas masks on.

Physical training was then a big part of basic training. Airmen participated in cross country races, conditioning exercises, tumbling, and games. And for those interested, trainees could use base facilities during free time to box, play basketball, tennis, volleyball, handball, or they could swim, golf at the nine hole course, or use rowing machines or punching bags at the base gymnasium.

Marksmanship training included qualification on the carbine, as well as familiarization with the Thompson submachine gun (the "Tommy Gun"), and the 0.45 Colt automatic pistol.

During the airmen's weekends, they could look forward to parades every Saturday, and top-notch entertainment on base. Entertainment regularly included live music by Lucky Millinder, Erskine Hawkins, and Bob Chester. San Antonio's young ladies, "handpicked," attended the dances, and received corsages upon arrival. (12:Appendix A)

All the trainee's off duty time was spent on base, except for one

12-hour pass at the end of the seventh week of training. The official history of this period (1 July-31 December 1948) described the benefits of almost all the time being spent on base: (1) it prevented the trainee from getting away from the military environment and turning to the "questionable activities of a large city [San Antonio]", (2) he was forced to turn to the "wholesome activities of the base," and (3) he learned how to find pleasure and fulfillment in the military way of life. (12:14,15)

After finishing basic training, the graduate received ten days delay en route (leave) to his next station. By managing his \$25 partial payment he received each month while in training, and receiving his monies due at graduation, he could purchase his bus, rail, or air ticket home.

During this same period, officials set up an experimental squadron. This squadron had freshly painted and renovated barracks, and a family style dining hall where food was placed on the table for the recruits to serve themselves. The airmen weren't pre-selected for this training, but were assigned there as a matter of routine upon arrival at Lackland AFB. (12:Appendix A)

Basic training had defined its goal as providing firm, but not harsh discipline, and developing courtesy, honesty, and integrity in the new airmen. (12:15)

By 1948, the quality of enlistees was improving. Some officials believed the caliber of enlistees was the highest it had been in the history of the Air Force. In 1948, the average recruit had eleven and seven-tenth years education and had not yet reached his eighteenth birthday. (11:6)

Basic training seemed to have developed a human touch. On 1 December 1948, the Commanding General of the Indoctrination Division delivered a speech in Orlando, Florida, where he discussed basic training. He noted "...the whole philosophy of our training is based upon making the new enlistee...a career airman...He is treated as an individual, with respect, courtesy, and with consideration. His individual problems become our problems. However, please don't misunderstand me...that we are in any way soft..." (11:9)

Several people attested to the success of 1948 basic training. Former Air Force Chief of Staff, General Carl A. Spaatz, commented in a letter to the Commanding General of the Indoctrination Division: "...On my recent visit...I could not help but be impressed by what I saw there...You have had courage to introduce basic training methods which are a wide departure from commonly accepted procedures and have achieved magnificent results..." (11:10)

Other senior officials were impressed with the quality of the new Air Force members. Brigadier General Len W. Johnson, former Commanding General, Fifteenth Air Force; Colorado Springs, Colorado, also wrote to the Indoctrination Division's Commanding General: "...They [the recruits] are alert, well-disciplined [sic], intelligent, and eager soldiers. It has been reported to me from one station that the civilians in the nearby community have observed these new young soldiers and have remarked that they are outstanding in appearance and behavior and a credit to the United States Air Force..." (11:10)

BASIC TRAINING AT LACKLAND AFB, 1951-1952

By late December, 1951, several changes in basic training occurred, probably driven by the Air Force need to produce more airmen in light of the tense world scene i.e. conflict in Korea. One major change was that Lackland AFB was again no longer the only Air Force basic training center. Before we turn our attention to the other locations, we'll look at Lackland's activities.

Beginning in October, 1951, the 3707 Training Squadron at Lackland AFB had special problems. Beside operating a training program for an increased number of basic trainees, the squadron lost several experienced tactical instructors (TIs). Also, a barracks renovation project (coupled with more trainees) resulted in housing trainees in tents. (2:1,2)

In spite of the housing problems, the trainees' health didn't appear to suffer. The men in tents experienced an exceptionally low incidence of colds and respiratory infections. Unit officials attributed this to preventive measures they took: floors in tents, stoves, adequate bedding and clothing, and a vigorous sanitation program. The majority of hospitalized cases were due to recruits needing extensive dental work which necessitated hospitalization at the end of basic training. (2:6,7)

The TIs administered the academic phase of training through lectures, demonstrations, and discussions, as well as their traditional duty of conducting close order drill. (2:9,10)

The training aids were based on applicability and practicality to the airmen. One training aid was diagrams painted on the pavement to assist the recruits when marching. Posters in the barracks demonstrated proper wear of the uniform, chain of command, and rank insignia. There were even posters about VD prevention on the latrine walls. For the airmen to review material previously covered, and to further their knowledge of the Air Force, each was issued "The Airman's Handbook." (2:10,11)

Some trainees tried to use the Air Force to escape the draft. The official history of the period (October-December 1951) from the 3707th Training Squadron noted that for some recruits "[e]scaping the draft seems to have been the primary motive for having enlisted and as a consequence none of them were reluctant to be discharged." (2:12) Evidently these recruits incorrectly thought obtaining a discharge would be a way to avoid further military service.

While some recruits attempted to manipulate discharges, during the same period, some airmen couldn't be retained because of mental incapacity. This may have been due to lowered enlistment standards effective in Fall, 1951. In fact, up to thirty percent of recruits were "...mentally incapable of handling the specialized technical courses demanded by the very nature of the air force [sic] mission." (2:12)

In late 1951, the program began conducting "Academic Flights" comprised "...primarily of illiterates..." to attempt to solve the problem. They had good results in a short time. (2:12)

While the Air Force was experiencing a decrease in recruit quality (low academic aptitude and some seeking discharge), AWOLs were relatively low. There was a slight rise in AWOL rates in December, 1951, probably attributable to the Christmas season. The policy for AWOL offenders was to impose severe punishment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, Article 15. This

course permitted rapid discharge of the offenders, and was pursued in favor of protracted courts-martial proceedings, which would delay separation action. (2:18)

By early 1952, basic training was a 48 day course, with modifications for the sub-marginal or academically inferior airmen. (1:24)

In the early winter of 1952, students' problems included those attributable to living in tents: crowded latrines and dust. But on 20 January 1952, students and permanent party personnel received a morale boost; newly renovated barracks were available for immediate occupation. (1:25)

The improved living conditions brought out new problems: new procedures for cleaning and inspecting the barracks had to be devised. (1:25)

The Student Council of the 3706th Basic Military Training Squadron voiced concerns in early 1952. One complaint was about the dining hall: there were shortages of "...cups and bowls, greasy trays, and poorly prepared, insufficient quantities of food." The squadron commander explained that conditions were caused by the increased number of trainees going through basic training, and the dining hall workers were doing the best they could under the circumstances. (1:25,26)

Other Student Council concerns were lack of free time (due to extra training) and long lines for entertainment. (12:26) The recreational concerns were addressed by providing two parties for the trainees in March, 1952. These parties had "...an abundance of WAFS, cookies, refreshments, and WAFS [emphasis is mine]." (1:29) Also in March, 1952, new benches and tables were added to the patio area. (1:29)

Not only did the students have concerns, so did the TIs. Not only did they have their normal work load, they were required to attend Weapons and Marksmanship classes Monday through Friday for four weeks from 1730-1930 hours. Although some TIs felt "...too much emphasis was being placed on ticket sales and church attendance and not enough on training," the "combined problems of too much to do and too little to do it with, had a serious effect on morale,...the loyalty of the men [TIs] never faltered." (1:26)

BASIC TRAINING AT OTHER LOCATIONS, 1951-1952

Some other basic training locations in the early 1950s were Eglin AFB, Florida; Camp Stoneham, California; Stewart AFB, Tennessee; and Sampson AFB, New York. We'll now look at each of these bases, and their encounters with basic training, beginning with Eglin AFB, Florida.

Eglin organized its basic training section on 27 January 1951. Its mission was to provide basic training for airmen who hadn't completed the required thirteen week course at Lackland AFB. The Eglin program began 16 and 17 February 1951 with a student body of 327 airmen from different organizations on Eglin AFB. (6:2)

Once Eglin's airmen were screened to determine how much basic training they needed, they were divided into flights. 229 airmen needed six weeks training, and 98 airmen needed eight weeks training. The entire student body consisted of five "six week flights" and three "eight week flights." (6:3)

The airmen had to adjust to the routine of basic training again. Some airmen weren't pleased with the arrangement because they were restricted during basic training. There was also a rise in disciplinary problems. Even though trainees had recreational facilities available (gymnasium, free movies, libraries, and service clubs), some were more interested in purchasing beer. A new policy prohibited beer sales to basic trainees, increased emphasis on sports, and awards for outstanding airmen and flights helped reduce the discipline problems. (6:3,4)

Eglin established an awards program to encourage airmen to do their best in training. On Wednesdays, outstanding airmen were given boat rides and fishing trips. The outstanding flights, in addition to the usual Sunday passes, were awarded passes for Saturdays. Those airmen who displayed high degrees of proficiency and desired qualities of airmen were promoted to Private First Class. (6:4,5)

On 31 March 1951, 229 airmen completed their needed six weeks of basic training. Major General Bryant L. Boatner, then Commanding General, Air Proving Ground (Eglin AFB), reviewed the graduation parade. Eight airmen, outstanding airmen of their class, reviewed the parade with the general. (6:4,5)

Camp Stoneham, California, also conducted basic training. It began with the arrival of 322 airmen on 27 and 28 January 1951. Camp Stoneham offered a program similar to Lackland's, accelerated to five weeks, for those airmen who hadn't completed basic training at Lackland. The Camp Stoneham program had a few minor additions to the Lackland program: three hours for Intelligence, Military Security, and Safeguard of Military Information; two hours for Interior Guard; one hour for Adaptation to Group Living; two hours for Articles of War; two hours for Aircraft Recognition; and one hour for Base Regulations and Policies. (10:3, also 10:Tab B)

The airmen's graduation was 5 March 1951. Not only did the chaplain give the traditional invocation and the group commander deliver a speech, there were several other speakers: Dr Huey L. Kostniak from UCLA, who delivered a talk on geopolitics; Warden Clinton T. Duffy from San Quentin Prison; Dr Fred Strip from University of California; and Chancellor Tully C. Knoles from the College of Pacific. (10:4,5)

Lackland AFB also sent some of its overflows to Stewart AFB, in Smyrna, Tennessee. Lackland gave notice to Stewart officials that approximately 700

airmen would be shipped, via troop train, on or about 25 January 1951. Lackland requested four officers and eight NCOs (noncommissioned officers) report to Lackland AFB to accompany the trainees. (9:110)

Between 27 January and 3 February 1951, a total of 842 airmen were at Stewart AFB for basic training. The student body had 734 airmen who just arrived from Lackland AFB, and 108 airmen already at Stewart AFB who hadn't completed their basic training. (9:111)

The official wing history (January-March 1951) indicates the records which accompanied the airmen were in good condition, but the pay records were delayed because of a nationwide rail strike in early February, 1951. (9:111)

Trainees' morale improved rapidly shortly after their arrival at Stewart AFB when they realized their "...training hours would be static, medical care excellent, quarters adequate, and meals nourishing and plentiful." (11:111)

Each trainee also received a \$25 partial payment at Stewart AFB to augment the \$30 each received at Lackland AFB. (9:111)

To speed the training process, without deleting any subjects, officials at Stewart devised a 30 day, 240 hour curriculum, to be conducted in five weeks. Each training week was six days instead of the traditional five days. (9:112)

In today's Air Force, where the focus is on continuous improvement and the customer, it's interesting to note that even in 1951, many years before the Quality Air Force (QAF) concept, Stewart AFB was practicing it. Their "customers" (the students) gave considerable input into the training program. Much of their input was acted on.

For example, many airmen expressed interest in airplane rides on Stewart's C-119 aircraft because "It was felt...a flight...would keep the morale at a high level, and would familiarize the airmen, many of whom had never flown, with the sensations of flying." (9:113) The interested airmen were permitted a forty-five minute flight on the aircraft. (9:113,114)

Many airmen also expressed concern about the guidance they received at Lackland AFB in choosing career fields. The airmen were given a chance to study and choose career fields they felt would benefit both themselves and the Air Force. Of course, the needs of the Air Force was the final determinant, but if an airman couldn't be assigned to one of his two choices, officials attempted to place him in an allied field. (9:115)

Stewart's trainees had a lot demanded of them. They were inspected every day, except Sundays. They also went through a standby inspection each Saturday followed by participation in a parade. (9:114)

Their success in training was rewarded in several ways. On 2 March 1951, theatrical talent from each flight staged a variety show for the airmen and other base units. This "...highly entertaining variety show..." (9:116) was so successful it led to the formation of a base dance band and marching band. (9:115,116)

At graduation, each airman was awarded a three day pass along with a basic airman certificate. Once the airmen returned from pass, they were reassigned to various units on base. (9:116)

The last basic training location we'll look at is Sampson AFB, which was in Geneva, New York.

From January through March 1952, Sampson AFB experienced only a few problems in training. Unlike Lackland's shortage of TIs, Sampson AFB had a surplus of 64 instructors, due to the deactivation of the 3670th Basic

Military Training Group. Many of the surplus TIs were absorbed into the Aviation Cadet Program, Officer Candidate School, and various technical schools. (8:1,2)

Winter weather in New York can be very severe. Sampson AFB officials virtually eliminated weather interfering with basic training by using an indoor drill hall. This innovation had a public address system and demonstrator stands so that up to twelve flights of airmen could receive indoor physical training simultaneously. The indoor drill hall was also used for indoor parades, drill competition, and marksmanship instruction. (8:2)

The students had five whole days and five half days specified on the schedule for them to wear the Class "A" uniform (now referred to as the Service Dress uniform). The idea, for the trainees to become proficient in the proper wear of the uniform, produced "...exceptionally good" results. (8:2,3).

Between 1 January and 31 March 1952, Sampson AFB produced 5,426 graduates of basic training. During the same time, officials expressed concerns about the quality of some recruits. One concern was the poor physical fitness of the new airmen, although the physical fitness post-test showed the average basic training graduate could be graded as "good." (8:3)

Another concern was the mathematical ability of some students. Sampson AFB officials developed "special tutoring" classes. These classes, designed for airmen who scored unusually low on pre-math exams, usually increased mathematical proficiency by 25 to 30 percent. (8:4)

Sampson's trainers developed a new training aid for the marksmanship classrooms. The devices were "Disassembly Tables" which had "[a] pattern of all the parts [of the US Carbine caliber 0.30 M-1 rifle]...stenciled on top of the table so that when the weapon is disassembled each piece can be placed on top of the pattern in its proper place." (8:4)

ATTITUDES OF AIRMEN AND TACTICAL INSTRUCTORS, 1955

Throughout the years, trainees encounters (whether effective or ineffective) with their TIs have made impressions on the airmen, and TIs were aware, during the 1950s, of the impressions they made on the airmen. Some examples of comments by both trainees and TIs follow. (13:13)

From an airman who thought his TI's instructional techniques were ineffective: "He usually gives a smart or uncalled for answer when asked a question."

Also from another airman who thought his TI used ineffective motivational techniques: "The most ineffective behavior of my TI is when he swears and curses at an airman. This makes the A/B [sic] more nervous and undecided. Therefore, he can't do the thing he is trying very well."

The following is from an airman who felt his TI used effective motivational techniques: "I think it was good that he put us in our places right away, but he did not do this too roughly. He tells us what our mistakes are and puts in just a touch of humor to keep us from thinking he is a bad leader. I don't resent him being rough with us, though. I think it is good for us. In other words, I think he is the best."

From a TI, his belief of his own effective instructional beliefs: "I had three or four airmen who were very slow in learning their chain of command and drilling. These men were taken into my personal guidance and after a period of time proved that extra time spent with them did more than just letting things ride."

And from another TI, his observation of effective personal relations: "In giving squadron taught material, I found that if I let the basics regulate the lessons to be taught and let them bring in their own ideas that a more thorough understanding of the subject was established. I did not follow any set procedure."

CONCLUSION

Throughout the years, Air Force basic training locations have ranged from luxurious Miami Beach hotels, to tents at Lackland AFB, Texas, and to locations in Florida, Missouri, California, Tennessee, New York, and several other places. Its duration has been anywhere from four to thirteen weeks, and its curriculum has changed with addition and deletion of different subjects. Its mission has remained unchanged throughout the years: producing quality airmen from civilians able to meet the needs of the Air Force. This it has done.

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