

HEADQUARTERS  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY  
Office of the Superintendent  
COLORADO

7 July 1959

Mr. Louis J. Matjasko  
1015 Idaho Avenue  
Natrona Heights, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. Matjasko:

I congratulate you on having a son with the desire and the abilities that enabled him to win an Air Force Cadet appointment. Let us anticipate a mutually happy and rewarding four years of following his progress.

This letter and periodic letters to follow will supplement the details which I hope your son is describing in his letters from his point of view. Between the two of us, and with the help of grade reports from the Registrar's Office and special letters you receive from his Squadron Air Officer Commanding, we can anticipate most of your questions.

Now I wish to emphasize for you an understanding of which your son should have no illusions by now. While his primary effort during four years of Academy instruction will be that of meeting the requirements for an academic degree, if that were the only objective, there would be no need for an Air Force Academy. The Academy offers more and requires more. He must also learn and demonstrate that he can fulfill the obligations of command with all the leadership skill, the self-control under pressure, and the ethical conduct that it demands. It is best that you and he recognize from the first that failure in that objective is just as serious as failure in the academic program.

The new cadets spent their first few days undergoing written examinations and attending orientation lectures much like the program provided upon admission to any campus. Unlike college practice elsewhere, however, they did not leave the Academy area and they did proceed to scheduled events in formation, the long established means of getting large groups of men from place to place quickly and without confusion. They have now started the program of summer training and indoctrination in Fourth Class (Freshman) customs. I take it for granted that you have heard details from your son. I want only to say something about purpose and plans.

The Summer Training Program is an integral part of the Academy curriculum, the beginning of courses in military training, flying training, and physical training. But of equal importance is the initiation into the Air Force Cadet way of life: The Cadet Class system and the Cadet Honor Code.

It is the Cadet Class System that is unique. Fourth Class customs are sometimes initially misunderstood, and to some new cadets, harshly demanding and restricting. However, with a little understanding, with willingness to listen and follow without question, and with the love of comradeship that is common to most boys, there is really more game than gall in the observance. Fourth Class doubletiding, squaring of corners, eating at attention, reciting at meals, and other requirements have purpose. While each requirement may not be of obvious educational value in itself, the result is a class spirit, a loyalty, and an anticipation of upper-class responsibilities and privileges that set the Air Force Cadet and the Cadet Wing apart from the ordinary.

New cadets are not "hazed" in any sense of the word; the statutes governing the service academies specifically prohibit hazing. Nothing is asked of a new cadet that is degrading. For two months under supervision of upper classmen he will be put through a regime of highly emphasized good manners, immediate response to command and unquestioning recognition of authority. Before long the expected responses and the head high, poker back bearing he struggles to assume now will become natural and comfortable. In September, academics will take so much time that little will be left for upper-class attention.

The Cadet Class System operates on the assumption that the potential leader must first know what it means to have to follow. The Fourth Classman learns by experience. Each upper-class year will then give him more leadership responsibilities, and with them more personal privileges. As a First Classman (Senior) he will be responsible for supervision of new cadets, but live under few restrictions himself. He will be held accountable for scheduled instruction and military duties, of course; but his out-of-class and off-duty time will be largely his responsibility to use to best advantage.

I mentioned the Cadet Honor Code as part of the Cadet way of life. Very shortly your son will be given a series of lectures on the Code by cadets of the First Class. He already knows the words of the Code; he will hear in great detail how it was devised, why and how it is controlled by the cadets themselves, and what it means to live by it or to violate it. The Honor Code is simply stated: "We will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate among us those who do." It is administered by a Cadet Honor Committee of elected representatives. Violations are not tolerated. A request for the resignation of the offender is the invariable result. Cadet development and acceptance of the Honor Code has been most gratifying to all of us. The student body that lives by such a principle works in an environment of mutual trust and confidence that must be experienced to be fully appreciated.

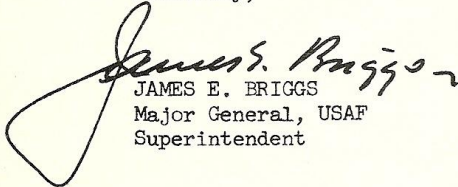
Perhaps I have answered some questions which your son's letters have raised and given some information which his letters may not have covered. There is still much more that you should know.

I have two suggestions. One is that you review the four years of cadet life described in the booklet "At The Ramparts" mailed with this letter. The second is that you see a 15-minute color film of cadet activities, "School of the Sky," which we have for loan.

If you have or can borrow a 16 millimeter sound motion picture projector, or can make arrangements with the local school for a showing, we shall be pleased to send you a copy of the film. Just address a note by card or letter to the Cadet Registrar, USAF Academy, Colorado, stating the date on which you would like to have the film.

Future letters and publications will provide news of cadet activities and cover essentials you should understand about the grading system, conduct, honors, and matters of uniforms, pay, and budget. But, if I or the Air Officer Commanding who is responsible for the squadron to which your son is assigned can be of any help now in clarifying some detail or providing specific information which you wish, please do not hesitate to write. Nothing that concerns the welfare of a cadet can be trivial. The interest and understanding of his parents is important to his welfare.

Sincerely,

  
JAMES E. BRIGGS  
Major General, USAF  
Superintendent

Enclosure