

Achieving Excellence in Drill and Ceremonies

By Lieutenant Colonel Buddy McCormick, former COWG Encampment Commander

This document is one of several documents that discuss drill problems that need improvement at COWG Encampment. The official reference for all drill and ceremonies procedures is AFMAN 36-2203, also known as the D&C Manual. The new CAP Pamphlet 60-33, CAP Drill & Ceremonies is CAP's equivalent to the Air Force Manual.

Read it, Teach it, Do it! We face a major drill problem, throughout CAP. Many cadets, teaching drill, have not read the D&C Manual. A lack of understanding or lack of knowledge of correct procedures results in incorrect instruction. This leads to the perpetuation of drill mistakes.

We will not allow this to happen at COWG Encampment. The encampment flight staff must be, or become, experts. We will require that cadet line staff obtain and read the D&C Manual thoroughly, teach procedures as described in the manual using the six-step process, and execute the maneuvers correctly. This process must begin ***before*** encampment. We will ***READ IT, TEACH IT, DO IT!***

Why Do We Drill?

We will start with a quote from the cadet leadership manual, "Learn to Lead", Module 1, and Chapter 1. The title of this module is "Air Force Traditions". The following quote is from the Drill and Ceremonies section of Chapter 1

*"Through drill and ceremonies, cadets develop teamwork. ***A unit's performance on the drill field is a measure of the cadets' sense of self-discipline.*** And because drill requires attention to detail, the cadets' commitment to the Core Value of Excellence is also on display. For these reasons, drill and ceremonies have been part of the cadet and Air Force traditions for generations..." *(The underlining is mine)**

That answers the "Why do we Drill?" question. Drill promotes teamwork. Drill performance is a measure of self-discipline. It requires attention to detail and a commitment to the Core Value of Excellence. In addition, drill is part of the military heritage that we have inherited in CAP.

What kind of job are we doing at Encampment? After serving as a squadron commander for several years and after attending cadet encampment four times as a TAC Officer, once as Deputy Commander, and four times as Encampment Commander, I have paid a lot of attention to the quality of cadet drill in CAP. I have found many cadets to be very professional in conducting and performing drill. They have clearly taken the necessary steps to develop the skills needed to perform drill that meets standards and to teach these drill standards to other cadets.

However, this is not true of all cadets. Some cadets ***do not*** perform to these same high standards. It is one thing for a new cadet airman to lack drill knowledge; however, it is another for a cadet to arrive at encampment as a cadet staff member and not be prepared to lead and teach drill to the proper standards. The COWG Encampment Training Manual, paragraph 1-2 states:

"Each staff member has an obligation to learn as much as they possibly can and offer the highest quality of training possible to others."

If utilized, the topics in this document will help cadets to attain the necessary level of knowledge and training to ensure success as a member of encampment cadet staff. It should also make you a real "drill pro" at your home unit.

If you have spent any time reading Air Force Manual 36-2203, Drill & Ceremonies, (D&C Manual), you already know that the D&C can be a bit boring. It is not likely to be on a "Best Sellers" list. As this document includes a lot of information from the D&C manual, I will try to introduce a bit humor here and there to avoid boring you to death.

What is the problem with the way we do drill in CAP? We use the same drill manual as the "real" Air Force and they seem to do a good job, so where are we going wrong? Before I answer this, let me re-emphasize that many CAP cadets **are** doing a good job. In my opinion, those that need to do a better job are falling short for two reasons. This comes from observation of cadets from many units:

1. Too many cadets learn to drill and teach drill **without** referring to the D&C Manual.
2. Too many cadets learn drill and teach drill by "word-of-mouth" instruction from other cadets. By the way, these "other" cadets likely learned drill the same way from a different set of "other" cadets. A long time ago in a galaxy far, far, away, some cadet may have started the process by **actually reading** the D&C manual. However, chances are that is cadet is no longer a CAP member. No one in this "word-of-mouth" line of communication may have **ever** read the manual.

There **are** cadets who **have** read the manual and do an excellent job of teaching drill. If you are lucky, you have had one of these cadets as an instructor. If so, you are likely doing a good job. However, as you pass along your knowledge to other cadets, what are the chances that you may inadvertently leave out some important item or step? If this happens, it will cause a problem that will only get worse.

Have you ever played the game called Telephone? You may have heard of it by another name but the game goes like this. There are several cadets sitting in a line. The first cadet in line is given a written message. He or she passes the message by whispering it to the next cadet. This continues with each cadet passing the message along by whispering. By the time the last cadet gets the message, the message usually bears no resemblance to the original message. Try this sometime. The message should contain sufficient detail and should include some numbers or dates. Single word messages do not work. This game will clearly exemplify the problem that occurs when cadets learn drill by passing instructions from cadet to cadet by word-of-mouth. Every time an instruction passes to another cadet, the message subtly begins to change.

The solution is to learn drill from the D&C manual. Why is the D&C manual so important? It is the "Ultimate Authority" of drill for CAP and the Air Force. All acceptable drill commands, the proper execution of drill maneuvers, and the acceptable standards are in the manual. *If a command is not in the manual, the command does not exist and is meaningless!* We will discuss "meaningless" commands later in this document.

Lead by Example

Everyone has heard of leading by example. Although cadet leaders should always lead by example, it is particularly important when leading drill. You should set an example in military bearing, uniform wear, attitude, and command presence. You should strive for perfection in these areas; anything less than perfection is likely to result in less than satisfactory performance.

Let's look at some quotes from the new cadet leadership manual, "Learn to Lead", Module One, Chapter One. The title of this module is "Air Force Traditions". The following quotes are from this chapter and all of these provide insight into "leading by example".

"Through drill and ceremonies, cadets develop teamwork. ***A unit's performance on the drill field is a measure of the cadets' sense of self-discipline.*** Because drill requires attention to detail, the cadets' commitment to the Core Value of Excellence is also on display. For these reasons, drill and ceremonies have been part of the cadet and Air Force traditions for generations. You can tell a lot about a cadet unit's attitude and state of training simply by watching them drill". (*The underlining is mine*)

"**Excellence in All We Do** - Being a cadet means that you value Excellence. ***No matter what challenge you are facing, give it your best effort!*** If you value Excellence in drill, you must demonstrate teamwork and know that teams can accomplish more than individuals. Moreover, to display this Core Value, you must make a commitment to continuous self-improvement – you must study, train, and work to better yourself and fulfill your potential in every aspect of your life."

"**Attitude** - ***The state of mind that lies behind your every action is called attitude.*** Your attitude affects how you see the world. To the person who has a negative attitude, the world is full of problems and nothing ever goes right. Every day begins with dread. Likewise, no problem is insurmountable to the person who maintains a positive attitude. They control their thoughts and feelings rather than allow negativity to imprison them. Although attitude is something that exists in your mind, it is visible to the people around you. Facial expressions, gestures, posture, and tone of voice reveal your attitude. The care you put into preparing your uniform displays your attitude as well, as do your test scores, class participation, and the overall quality of your work."

"It is especially important for leaders to maintain a positive attitude because ***all attitudes, good and bad, are contagious. A positive attitude begins in the realization that attitude is a choice – you can choose to be positive, or you can choose to be negative.***"

The D&C Manual provides some important General Rules for Command in paragraph 2.2. These relate to leading by example and are essential skills for any cadet leading or instructing drill.

- 2.2.1. *When giving commands, the leader is at the position of attention. Good military bearing is necessary for good leadership. While marching, the leader must be in step with the formation at all times.*
- 2.2.2. *The commander faces the troops when giving commands except when the element is part of a larger drill element or when the commander is relaying commands in a ceremony.*

Following these two rules provide great opportunities to lead by example. New cadets and basic cadets in a flight are looking to the leader to set the example. They will emulate the leader. If they see a leader who is hesitant, confused, lazy, sloppy, or too casual, when giving drill commands, ***this will, unfortunately, become the performance standard for that flight.*** Establish the proper standard *from the start*. First impressions are lasting impressions. You only get ***one chance*** to make a first impression. A leader's posture, facial expressions, and tone of voice all contribute to the overall image that others see. Be certain that the basic cadets in the flight are seeing what you ***want*** them to see.

- **Correct mistakes at the first reasonable opportunity.** Every drill maneuver has very specific standards for proper performance of the maneuver. Correct mistakes at the first available opportunity. Notice that I did not say immediately. Some mistakes can wait until later for correction; however, the correction should be as soon as feasible. Serious mistakes ***should***

be corrected immediately! Do not wait too long before correcting any drill errors. You **will** forget to do it! If cadets make mistakes **without** correction this sends the message that the mistakes are acceptable. This becomes their new standard for performance and that will become the standard that **they will teach** when it is their turn to teach drill. Mistakes **cannot** go uncorrected – **ever!**

- **Do not take shortcuts during drill.** Do every maneuver correctly every time! You cannot allow mistakes to go uncorrected because you are in a hurry.

Drill Commands

I am not teaching basic cadets to drill at encampment – **you are!** You should be the one to learn the correct drill commands; therefore, I will not discuss all of them here. However, I will discuss some common errors that I have observed at previous encampments.

There will be times when, despite your best efforts, the correct command for a situation may not be “on the tip of your tongue”. Still, a command is required. What do you do? The answer to this depends on circumstances. If you are drilling as a single unit and are not in the flow of traffic of other units, or in the middle of a street, halt the formation and figure out what to do. Your flight should respond properly to a command; however, they cannot read your mind. If there is a chance that your command may not provide them with enough information to do what you expect, you need to come up with a way to give them more information.

If you need to accomplish something not covered by one of the D&C commands, you can simply give your flight an “order” to accomplish what you need to do. The flight needs to be at a halt when you use this method.

Conclusion

Learn to teach and lead drill the **correct** way – from the D&C Manual. Never, accept less than correct performance in drill. “Good enough” **is not** good enough. Strive for Excellence!

Acquire and USE the Drill & Ceremonies Manual – It is essential that Squadron Commanders, Squadron First Sergeants, Flight Commanders, and Flight Sergeants have either a copy of AFM 36-2203, Drill & Ceremonies, **OR** CAP Pamphlet 60-33, *CAP Drill and Ceremonies* manual with them at encampment. In addition, the Standardization & Evaluation Team should have the manual. CAPP 60-20, *CAP Drill and Ceremonies* and the Air Force D&C Manual are both available for download from the encampment website homepage.