

TribFocus

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Daren Shewchuk of Ivermay, Sask., gets an eyeful.



Tribune photos by Jon Thordarson

Murray Lagace totals score on rifle range while Kevin Klein (right) puts his weapon in order.



Army cadet in practice jump; sea cadets in whaler; and air cadet in glider.



Major Cameron: youth is looking for a challenge.

'Change in morality' boosts cadet image

By Douglas Firby
Tribune staff writer

Long hair and hanging around street corners are out. Marching, taking orders, and rigorous training are in.

It's not that visible yet, but if the recent upsurge in popularity of air, sea, and army cadet programs becomes a trend, the social unrest of the last generation of young people could be replaced by an approach that has discipline as its cornerstone.

"The anti-establishment kick appears to be on the wane. Young people are looking for a challenge — something solid and stable," said Major Keith Cameron, senior cadet officer for the prairie region.

Enrolment in the three cadet leagues hit an all-time low in 1971 and 1972, said Major Cameron. But in the last two to three years a "distinct rise" has shot the number across the country to past 60,000; not a record, but a lot healthier.

"When the anti-establishment kick was on parents were pretty puzzled as to how to handle their kids," Major Cameron said. And he admitted there was some soul-searching within the cadet leagues and the department of national defence about the cadet programs.

Youth forced change

As a result, "the programs that all three (branches) are offering are a heck of a lot better than in 1971-72. The younger generation forced us to come up with new programs."

Part of that change was an apparent effort to play down the obvious military connections of the program.

"The stated aim (of the programs) is citizenship. The leagues are under civilian control," said Pat LeRoy, cadets admissions officer.

The cadet leagues and the department of national de-

fence co-ordinate the operation in what Major Cameron terms a "partnership."

"The clear emphasis is far from war preparations. Our primary objective is to make useful citizens," he said.

Captain Dave Preikshot of CFB Winnipeg said surveys indicate a high ratio of the cadets move into the armed forces.

"Many go on and join the military," said Major Cameron. "But the cadets is not a gristmill for the armed forces. The people who think that couldn't be more wrong," said Major Cameron.

"We who are involved in the cadets are sensitive to that. We have been accused the program is just to get kids into the military."

During the annual meeting of the Air Cadet League of Manitoba held in Winnipeg in June, past president Percy Davis told delegates that "a change in morality" sent young people back to the air cadets in search of discipline they were not getting at home or at school.

Mr. LeRoy said the Winnipeg admissions office gets two dozen calls a week from parents requesting information about the programs.

"It appears that the parents are concerned about the discipline of their kids," he said.

Parents say the programs mature their children and keep their minds off less desirable activities.

Beryl Bingham had two sons in the program. With her time taken up by school, the cadets made it easier to be a single parent, she said.

"I was pursuing my degree at the time. It was a great relief for a mother; I knew they weren't hanging around on some street corner."

Her younger son, Randy, dropped out of sea cadets after a couple of years. "I think he sort of burned out. He only played in the band," she said.

School work improved

But Philip, 18, stayed with the program, working his way up to chief petty officer. "Philip's schooling improved after he joined. It was ideal for me because the two boys had something in common at home."

Next year Phillip will have to leave because of his age, but Mrs. Bingham said he plans on becoming a training officer for the sea cadets.

"Philip goes to B.C. every summer (for activities on the HMCS Quadra). I think being away from their parents for the summer is good for their growth," she said.

Like Mrs. Bingham, Irene Ferguson said her sons found

cadets more challenging than the Boy Scouts program.

"They seem to thrive on discipline," she said, noting that one son "spends hours polishing the brass buttons and his shoes."

Bruce, 14, comes from a military family. His father, Fergie, has been in the air force 23 years.

"Being in an air force family our son was aware of the rank and discipline of the army. So we felt our son would enjoy it — but we never expect he'd love it this much."

Mrs. Ferguson said her son would rather go to cadets than a school dance. And he even got his hair cut in order to join the band. "The school kids laughed at him. They laughed until he got an all-expense-paid trip to play in the band for the Grey Cup."

Now Bruce wants to go to the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ont., as a start to a military career.

"Idle hands breeds problems," said Mrs. Ferguson. "But (at the cadets) you have super leaders and you just don't want to miss it."

Their daughter doesn't feel the same way.

"She was never too interested. She was into other things — singing, dancing, piano, debating at school. I guess she just didn't have the time."

But some girls enjoy the program.

Unlike the Ferguson children, the son of Edith Motkluk showed no interest in the program, but Brenda, 17, enjoys the aero-engine technology courses to which she has access in the air cadets.

With the encouragement of a friend, Brenda joined a squadron despite the reservations of her mother.

"I was hesitant at first. Being an ex-air force wife I thought a lot of drinking would go on. But that's not so," said Mrs. Motkluk.

"She was 15 when she started. I thought she was too young. But she's learned a lot of things. The discipline is a good thing," she said.

"I think the program is terrific. It's a bunch of kids her own age doing what they want to."

The official acceptance of females into the cadets is, in part, responsible for the resurgence of popularity. This year one cadet in four is female.

"They're an asset to the corps they belong to," said Major Cameron.

"The guys were glad to have the girls," said Mr. Leroy. The natural competition that might have been expected just didn't materialize.

Mr. Leroy said the girls have had their own corps for years, but without official recognition they didn't get the competition allowances and uniforms they are now given

He said the girls have a lot of stamina. They learn to march easily as well.

"They want to be treated just like any other cadet, and they are," said Major Cameron.

"They get into the same programs . . . with the exception of the army parachuting course." For now, that is viewed as too rigorous.

A quota for girls

Due to a shortage of facilities, there is a quota limiting the girls to no more than 30 per cent of the total, said Major Cameron.

"But there's no hard and fast rule about the quota . . . thinking at headquarters is very flexible. As we see the demand growing, we will renegotiate those quotas."

But the typical family, such as that of Jim Lajoie, still shows signs of the males favoring the program more.

While his two daughters showed no interest in the program, Mr. Lajoie's two sons went into the sea cadets. Robin, 17, was so heavily involved that he had to drop out near the end of the year to catch up on school work.

But for Robin and his older brother Alain, the John Travers Cornwall V.C. corps of the sea cadets in Winnipeg has been very good.

Mr. Lajoie said he and his family are from Trois Rivières, Que.

"When we came here seven years ago the kids couldn't speak a word of English. Alain was very shy as well. But after a few months in the cadets his was outgoing and had made a lot of friends."

He said his sons found out about the cadets by themselves. One joined and the other followed soon afterward.

"The officers take real good care of them," said Mr. Lajoie. "They are disciplined. But it's not a harsh discipline; it's a good discipline. It's not like when I was in the navy 24 years ago."

It appears that for the immediate future organizers are going to stay with a formula that draws young people — high on discipline, but spiced with adventure.

Major Cameron said that as many kids as possible (this year one-third of all cadets) are involved with the regional and national camps. And the three corps are maintaining their separate identities, despite similar green uniforms (which will be introduced soon as a cost-cutting measure), to maintain that "friendly rivalry".

"With the cadets the esprit de corps in each of the three is a good thing. I don't see that changing."

Summer is busy time in cadet training

Cadet programs are a year-round thing, says Major Keith Cameron, but defence officials in Ottawa cite July and August as the best time for young people to have "first-hand exposure to military life."

This summer 18,000 cadets are scattered from the Arctic to Europe (on exchange visits) in the massive training programs organized and funded jointly by the Cadet Leagues and the department of national defence.

The purpose of the programs is a combination of things — to develop "citizenship qualities," physical fitness, and even some interest in the armed forces.

The courses include leadership training, diving, sailing, communications, parachuting, flying and gliding.

Manitoba courses

For Manitoba cadets, there is a course in riflery in Winnipeg, a sailing camp at Gimli, and courses in gliding at Rivers.

More than 250 air cadets are getting flying training at bases across Canada, while another 290 are training for their glider pilot "wings."

Courses at Greenwood, N.S.; Bagotville, Que.; Trenton, Ont.; Penhold, Alta., and Whitehorse in The Yukon cover aircrew survival, air studies, junior leadership training, band drill, athletics and basic training.

Select groups at Edmonton and Nanaimo, B.C., are learning ground searching and survival, and bushcraft.

Senior sea cadets win the honor of sailing on the HMCS quadra for courses in engineering and practical leadership, and some will sail with it later in the summer for exchange visits to Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States.

One parent described the Quadra experience as "just marvellous." Parents are invited when the course finishes to see what the young people have learned.

"It's quite a show," said one.

Exchange visits are regarded by cadets as an honor for their achievement in the program. Former army cadet Richard Chartrand was chosen to take a training course in Wales last year.

"You have to have a gold star to qualify and be older than 16," he said. He was 17.

Ten cadets and two officers were chosen for an "Outward Bound visit — a rigorous outdoor program in the U.K. Before they left, they were given three weeks of "intensive training" at Petawawa, Ont.

The rules at Petawawa were stringent.

"There was no smoking during the training. They got you up at six each morning, and you would run before breakfast."

He said that through the day the trainees would run

wherever they went. Other training included swimming, weight lifting, and obstacle courses.

At the end of the three weeks the trainees had to compete a 10-mile run, in full gear to qualify for the trip to Wales. Everyone made it.

The group was given three days to tour London before they were sent to the Joint Service Training Mountain Centre in Wales. There they received two weeks of training that was more rigorous than ever, Mr. Chartrand said.

The Canadians were mixed with British trainees. They were given instruction in compass reading, mountain climbing, and kayaking.

Morning run to sea

Again they got up every morning at six. They immediately ran to the Irish Sea, about a half a mile away, jumped in, and ran back to the camp.

Other training activities included running with a log on their backs, climbing 15 foot walls without ropes, and climbing out of a mine.

The "exam" was a three-day survival camp.

"We were given a tent, a stove and some food, and we had to go 40 miles," said Mr. Chartrand.

"We climbed about 22 mountains. They weren't straight up and down or anything like that, so it was more a test of

endurance."

The group with the fastest time for the course made it in 11 hours.

Although the course was well supervised, Mr. Chartrand said it was not without danger. One cadet cracked his skull in a fall.

Mr. Chartrand fell 20 feet, head first, on one course, and miraculously escaped with only a chipped elbow.

"I was in shock for about 40 minutes. They thought I broke my back or something," he said.

When the course was over, the cadets toured Germany, Switzerland and France, and were given an honorarium of \$100.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime thing. I'd recommend it to anybody who can handle it," said Mr. Chartrand.

For those who don't qualify, the army cadet league has national and regional programs that compete for popularity with the other two branches.

An army indoctrination course is teaching 110 cadets how to survive north of the 60th parallel. Others are parachuting in Edmonton or practicing rifle marksmanship.

And 200 cadets, of whom 28 are female, are in Banff, taking the national course in mountain and glacier climbing.

Nearly one-third of the cadets in Canada are involved in the summer programs run by the three leagues.