

Texas Wing Winter Encampment, Day Five

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Photos by C/2d Lt Raphael Erie

Camp Swift, Texas—The last full day of encampment has arrived and everyone has mixed feelings about it. Some cadets are excited that encampment is nearly over, since a little home sickness is not uncommon, while others feel a bit sad that they are leaving their CAP family behind.

The last day starts out with reveille at 0445, but there was neither morning formation nor PT. The staff wanted to give all cadets a chance to get their Blues uniform in perfect shape for the upcoming inspection and for the Dining In at the end of the day. Within the two hours they were given, the cadets worked hard on their Blues, making sure that their uniform was neat and looked just right.



Day 5, the homestretch, the last inspection finds the cadets in their best uniform.

With their uniforms ready for the day, the cadets headed to the chow hall to get some breakfast. It was delicious. The French toast, potatoes, sausage patties, milk and juice were just what they needed. The cadets gobbled down the food and returned to their barracks to make sure they hadn't forgotten any detail before the inspection. If they wanted to, they all had a chance to go to a religious service conducted by the Wing Chaplain, Major Ron Whitt.

The SET members finally arrived and inspected the cadets for the last time. After a very brief inspection, the fun started. At the end of every encampment, the basic flights participate in a series of team competitions. They are friendly but fiercely contested.

First came the Knowledge Bowl, where they were tested on Air Force and Civil Air Patrol knowledge. Three tables were set up with two bells sitting on each one. Two SET members sat at the far end of the tables, with four basic cadets sitting at the side. One SET member asked the cadets a series of questions, while the other marked down points. The team that won the most points won the round. Seems simple enough, but for every question a cadet got wrong, it counted against that team's score. The teams battled against each other fiercely, ending with India flight taking home first place, Charlie flight earned second and last but not least Delta flight brought up the rear. Congratulations to India and all the other flights for their hard work and diligence. Everyone has improved greatly over the past week, and they can rightly be proud of it.

Next was the Drill competition. Each flight, starting with Alpha and ending with India, entered a squared-off area marked by small orange cones and performed in front of C/Maj Vaughan and C/Capt Joel Buchman. The flight sergeants led the flights and marched them around the area.

They were given a list of the drill movements they needed to perform, and the flight was graded on how well they executed each maneuver.

Following the drill competition, the cadets had Pass in Review practice. They have really improved over the week, and their parents will definitely be proud of them when they see the final parade as they Pass in Review in front of the Wing Commander, Col Joe R. Smith. Lunch came about noon, and the hungry cadets went into the mess hall and stood in line for their lunch of sub sandwiches, cookies, fruit, and milk or juice. The cadets ate quickly, knowing that they didn't have much time until the next event.

The last competition of the day was PT, and all cadets – basic and staff – performed marvelously. Picking the best flight was extremely hard.

Probably the most fun activity today was Flight Sports. Each flight competed against each other in different sports such as Ultimate Frisbee, Tug-of-war and Kick Ball. We all had a lot of fun, and eventually the cadet staff joined in on it too.



The Tug-of-war is the most popular competition. In the end, nobody wins, so nobody loses either.

But the best was yet to come. The mess hall in our training area was too small, so we couldn't all fit in. Luckily, they let us borrow a larger mess hall, and that was fine. All cadets got taken in vans some three miles away, and got a chance to chat some until they could enter the mess hall. The meal was delicious, and the Dining In was fun. The Grog Table was where you took your punishment if you had said or done something wrong, or if someone just wanted to be mean to you. The punished were mostly cadet staff.

The Encampment Commander, Col Frank Eldridge told the cadets how well they had done. Then the Wing Commander, Col Joe R. Smith asked them three questions, "Did you learn something? Did you like the food? Did you have fun?" All cadets replied "Yes Sir!" loudly to each one. Then Col Smith added, "I hope you'll go back to your squadrons and share those thoughts with everyone there. Tell them what you liked, and show them how much you learned. Then we'll get more of you for our next encampment."

This year, the slide show at the end of the meal had great songs for the sound track, and the slides had some video clips mixed in with them. They showed all the things that the cadets had done until that very afternoon, and it was wonderful to see. The five Cadet PAOs had taken all the photos, and they decided which to use, and picked the music too. All cadets gave the PAO Team a long and loud round of applause.

Now, all that is left is cleaning up the billets, packing, and passing in review. That will be tomorrow, the sixth day. It hardly seems possible.



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A few More Images of the Tug-of-War activity
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