

Doolies discover 'air' in Air Force

By AIC Lance Hill

"It is one real way we have of putting the 'air' in the Air Force Academy," said Capt. Mack Hardwick, officer in charge of "Operation Stardust."

Through Stardust, Captain Hardwick explained, "doolies" who have only been at the Academy for a few weeks receive orientation flights in one of the 19 T-33 jet trainers based at Peterson Field.

Dating back to the fall of 1965, Stardust is the oldest phase of the Airmanship program. It runs for 23 days and, with some 1340 doolies scheduled for the 30 minute sorties, the T-Bird pilots and flight crews are kept hopping.

"For many of these young men, this is their first close-up look at a military aircraft, Captain Hardwick said, "and for almost all of them this is their first military jet flight."

Before the doolies climb into the back seat however, they are given a full briefing on aircraft safety and they view a specially prepared film that shows them exactly what they'll encounter in their flight.

Then the doolies receive personally fitted life support equipment and parachutes. After that the program moves very quickly and before he knows it, the future cadet is being strapped into his seat ready for taxi and takeoff.

"When you get these guys up there it is sometimes hard to control their emotions," Captain Hardwick said; he added that most of the time their response is one of "pure elation".

All the pilots in the Stardust program, including Captain Hardwick and Lt. Col. Charles Summers, Chief of the airmanship division, are assigned to the Academy and this too is part of the motivational aspect of the flights.

"These men are going through

some intensive training — the pressure is on and this gives them a chance to see what the Air Force is all about," the program OIC said.

As for the doolies' reaction back

on the ground, "pure elation" is quite accurate.

"Fantastic-just fantastic," beamed one excited youngster almost out of breath.

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(U.S. Air Force Photo by AIC Lance Hill)

One down
One more on deck