

Cadets receive taste of rescue training

Story and photos by Terry Fletcher

CIVIL AIR PATROL Cadets from 10 states converged on New Mexico's Pecos Wilderness this week for a taste of Air Force pararescue training.

Approximately 37 cadets, ages 15 and older, arrived at Kirtland July 7 to participate in the Pararescue orientation course offered by the 1550th Aircrew Training and Test Wing. The course included 2½ days in the classroom and a tour of base facilities. The last four days were spent in field training in the Pecos. The cadets were taught discipline and wilderness awareness.

The cadets wanted to be treated as PJ students and program organizer TSgt. Dave Thompson (photo below) obliged.

The cadets were required to stay at the campsite unless they were in class. They could only leave the area after they stood at attention and asked for permission to leave. C-rations made up their meals and a personal inspection was required before breakfast.

Discipline was enforced with cadets doing 50 to 100 pushups for such infractions as standing on climbing equipment, answering "Yes sir" instead of "Yes sergeant" and not observing safety rules. The strict observance of rules encouraged the cadets to work as a team, a PJ instructor said.

"The teamwork paid off in the field when the cadets worked on the traverse line, which is strung across a canyon and used to transfer the rescuers and an injured party in a Stoke's stretcher," the instructor said.

"The cadet was required to transfer across the canyon, usually with the encouragement of his friends to urge him along," he added.

The importance of keeping pace while hiking in the wilderness was emphasized by SSgt. Martin Alvarez before he took his group on a two-mile hike. TSgt. Larry Austin made sure his cadets knew where they were by reading the map. Then he taught them how to use their compasses to find the easiest route to their destination.

There are two Albuquerque CAP Squadrons. Interests range from mountain rescue to flying. Meetings are held on Mondays and Thursdays in Building 434 on Kirtland West at 7:30 p.m. Pete Robles, 268-0156, or Norman Sorensen, 265-0101, have more information.