

Ep. 68: The new Airman experience

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Welcome to another episode of the Sword and Shield. I'm your host, Chief Master Sergeant, Christopher Howard, 960th Cog Superintendent. And with me today I have I mean basic Chisholm. I also work at the 960th unit. Well welcome. I appreciate you taking the time and let me ask you a few questions. Thank you for having me. No, can you tell us? I'll tell our listeners a little bit about yourself. Well, I'm originally from Killeen, Texas. I'm 19 years old. I just recently joined the Air Force Reserve, awesome. So what made you decide to join the Air Force Reserve? Well I really have a military background so I'm familiar with all of the branches of the service and my mom, my dad did 25 years together. Okay, God just said there was that sense of purpose, that sense of service that you wanted to follow on in those footsteps then. Yes. Okay so I was wondering you could share with our listeners a little bit about your experience, you know, how did the recruiting process go for you? Well, trying to get an Air Force recruiter is like really hard because they they're quarters is always up and everybody wants to be in the Air force is it's the best. Yes and so I had to go find them. They couldn't come find me and going through high school. You see a whole lot of recruiters from different branches. Okay so you really wanted to be an Air force really badly remember? That's awesome. So I'm glad that we were able to make their you were able to make that happen. Right? So that perseverance got you to uh the recruiting process. Uh so we finished the recruiting process, did you go directly into BMT or were you part of the D. T. N. F. I was part of the T. F. I got out of the D. T. F. Around March. Okay, can you tell me a little bit about your experience at the D. TNF? Well the experience was we had like a weekend like a UTA like a normal and um I like the log in at 7:00 and stay up there till four. Yeah so what did they teach you a lot of useful items that you were able to leverage for BMT or they did and they also we got to get in touch with a whole lot of people from the different units and 9 60 just happened to be one of them. And at the time I didn't know what unit I was belong to until master sergeant boy shout to him. Um Said Aaron inches long, you do realize your supervisors on the phone right? And I didn't realize it was Sergeant Rodriguez. Okay, that's awesome. Yeah. No the D. D. N. T. F. Coordinators. Those individuals do a lot of hard work, you know crawling people getting the information and really setting the stage. So would you say that the D TNF really set the stage for BMT or at least give you some good skills to be prepared for it? They gave me some good insight on what to look for and how to pack. Especially they said pack as light as you can because when you're leading basic training you're going to have a lot of stuff and they was right about it. Okay so tell me a little bit about your BMT experience. How did that go for you? Well, I didn't have the traditional guilt,

the blessing yelling her face. Mine was really I got off the van, I waited for like felt like an hour but it was really like 30 minutes with my anticipation was so high. I got off, I waited, they walked me to the awning and sat there some more and then as soon as we saw the actual drill sergeant, she was so sweet. She had like a nice voice. So we was walking to our dorms. That's when we got yelled at you and that's when I met my first Mt I sergeant false. Okay. Um when we were talking earlier actually I want to step back for a second. Um, you were talking, you were telling me about your experience when uh, at MEPS and uh actually doing your first oath, I wonder if you can share what you share with me about that. You know that, that feeling, what did you feel when you first rose your hand and made that commitment? Well, I didn't do the old set nips. I did it in an Um conference room on Fort Hood, but after I just worn in, I felt powerful. Like I felt like I was one of the 1% that everybody talks about when they first entered the military. There's a lot of people don't make it to the military because they just give up off rip after the first no or the first doors closed in your face. Gotcha. I felt, I felt pretty good. That's awesome. You know that the feeling is really something that you're not going to find anywhere else. I think, you know that at the moment when you make that commitment and you realize that you're now part of something much bigger than you, right? And even with that, that experience in your family of your, your parents being service members and making that commitment. Now you've done the same thing. Okay. Um, so jumping back to BMT, right? You got the hook, right, okay. They're nice. They're sweet. And then also bam bam in your face right upstairs. So when I tell you, I have to run four flights of stairs because my uh forms at the top and I had this little, well it really wasn't little, it was kind of heavy and I have a book bag and I was running up the stairs and almost trip, but I couldn't let I didn't want to let my Mt. I see, because you know, I know I was gonna get in more trouble, but when I was coming in, I was the last person to get there because I didn't have the other experience where they were staying up until like two o'clock in the morning corner, sleep waking up. You know, I actually had a good night's rest, woke up at 11 a.m. Just got on the band, it was amazing. So I didn't have that. But everybody, when I got in there I was huffing and puffing and I was looking around, it looked like a jail cell kind of sort of because it was the b bunk and a bunk and I went to a bunk and everybody just stared at me and I was like, oh my God, why are you all staring at me like, you know, nervous not to know not to realize that I was the tallest female and I always been talking my whole entire life, so that wasn't nothing new, but it was, it was yeah, right, Yeah, the, fresh experience. I don't know, I don't know if I should be happy for you are angry that you didn't get out because I can tell you, you know, I got off that bus is picking up, dropping down, picking up, dropping down. What are you looking at? Right? It was it was crazy. But then again, you know, my memory starts to win since I'm so old. But no, that's good. Did you have a good experience and then you started off so I wonder if you can share with the audience. Uh you know the good, the bad, the ugly of BMT. So the good part was we had three course meals and the food, the Air Force food, I would say it's downright amazing. And I had dessert which was panned by and jelly. Uh huh for me, I four sandwiches and I can eat so with building those Simmons, I killed everything on my plate and then for dinner they had the protein bars. I don't know if you like the strawberry protein bars, but I love it. So yeah, yeah.

I'm definitely hating on you right now, right? Really? Because I'll tell you that uh that trying to go up there for dessert. The snake pit was a no go. Yeah. They things will get thrown at you yell at you. Uh and they didn't have protein parts back then because it's cold. It's a different program. Maybe, you know, like I'm not really hating on, you know, that's great. But we saw wasn't a child runner because um they picked on how you position yourself and did your reporting statement and if you messed up the whole type of, you know, the whole tire lunchrooms already quiet. So they were like surgery. What? And then they just get on them. I'm just like, ok. Yeah. And that's what I got the seat right? So going up there to get a piece of cheesecake or some jello cheesecake are yellow. And so this is the nineties. So it was a little bit different. We have coffee. At first they tried to tell us we couldn't drink coffee, but then my auntie, I was like, go ahead, drink it and they yell at you say help them that we said that you could after that I was I was hooked. You know, it was, you know, you had to have a couple of waters on there. You might be able to get the colored water. They had like orange and they had green. I don't know was it flavored water? Because I had orange juice, cranberry juice. It wasn't juice. They said it might have been juice, but it was more like a non-carbonated drink. Uh and a bottle of water and you're supposed to have the field were supposed to have like a big old filled water bottle, supposed to drink it all the way down. See I didn't do that, I got away with it only one time I got caught and I hated it. We had our canteens and we were always in the canteens and you could get lucky with the flavored water. Um yeah, it definitely was a lot different now. I'll tell you after coming to Chief and I had the opportunity to go over for a tour. And one of the best things that I enjoyed about the tour at the time was being able to sit next to the snake pit, went to T. I talked to the T. S and not get yelled at for eating because you're not training, right? The smell, the smell was the same. I can tell you that that dining facility smells the same today as it did in the nineties. I'm sure it smells the same way it did in the eighties. I don't know what they do, but it's the same smell as like muscle memory walked in. Like I still see my basic training because my lodging is like literally right across the street. So when the rebels go off, I hear all the NTS yelling, everything awesome. So you get a little bit of taste. So like it was decades before I came back through here from the time I went through basic training, my dorm still stands back at the 3 to 2. Uh we use Alcatraz or were you? So back at the time it was, it was called Mother Russia. So it was a little bit different. Yeah, so um it's right there on the end, right there on the corner and uh yeah second or not. So and then uh so you finished BMT So you love the food? So that's a good, what was the bad? The bad part was P. T. Yeah I was not accustomed to waking up at 5 45 and throwing on whatever the pt uniform was today. Hopefully it wasn't cold and raining and if you were you have to put your E. C. W. W. Vaughn. But I just, it took me a while to warm up to that because when I wake up I don't automatically be on the go and I sit there process my day, you know that wasn't no time for that. You have to get up, make your bed up and run upstairs or run downstairs, work out for like an hour and then take a shower or if you're not lucky go eat and you just smell bad. So gotcha, I can tell you a real world experience of how that works out for you, right? So I used to be on alert crew and the klaxon goes off the horn, you just jump up and run. So I'll say BMT definitely got me prepared for that. It just blind muscle memory, you know screaming yelling and

everybody running, right? So uh it's pretty crazy. But you also shared with me earlier about how you had to work towards a goal on that PT. So it was bad but you work through it and then you have that success. Can you share that with our listeners? So basically the wrong part they all, everybody's gonna tell you that the run part is like the hardest part it might be for some but it only takes like three weeks for your body to get in condition and the actual running. But if you have like a not a strong core and you're trying to work out with the setups it's going to be a lot difficult. And that was my struggle. And so when everybody was done with P. T. I just knew I was not about to fail and get recycled because I'm not going back to week one. So failure was not an option. Some people actually quit and they told one of my MTs that they didn't want to do it so they quit or whatever for me. I had a determination to like go through it. So everybody will be either studying, I'll be in the room by myself for hours on end. Just like doing sit-ups, crunches and all the other stuff to uh my way through uh working out. So how did it feel when you actually hit that number that you were going for? I'm not going to lie almost showed it to you but I'm not going to do it in front of people. I'll go to that. So that's what I did after I did my final PT test, I cried a little bit and I was like yes, but I knew it was official when I got my airmen's coin on that day even though it was raining, we had to like stay underneath the awning so we don't have the traditional right stuff. But there was that sense right here. Here was a challenge. Here's what you decided and you did the work, you did the hard work to get there and then you got to reap the rewards. So um it's that that's self-preservation, our perseverance, you know that that's key there. So we got the good, we got the bad now what was ugly, Who's up? I got in trouble one time I got to okay so I got to you for forgetting to bring my shoes to an appointment. And I guess that day my M. T. I was not feeling it. He even said that he was not on his a game that day. So I picked the wrong day to forget my shoes to go to appointment, which made everybody 30 minutes late. That was on my ticket. And so I'm in the bathroom searching, I'm searching I'm searching I'm like oh my God I forgot my shoes. And so one of my other flat mates, they came into the bathroom and they, you know being a good wingman they went upstairs and before they can come downstairs are empty I saw them and ask them what would you do and they said hey I'm about to help out Airman Chisholm Barbara and before that they can't even get the Airman Chisholm part out. He like starts downstairs and like finds me, he's like, you're getting you for the week and I was like, wow, that's crazy. You know, It's one of those things that it's always uh you know, a gut check. I know that I had a 341 back in the day pulled for making some goofy mistakes. But that gut check definitely teaches that one or two things, you know, and being prepared is one of those things. So I'm sure you took a little bit from it, you know, it was uncomfortable at the moment, but we talked about it. You made it through, you know, actually sat down and talked about him. He wasn't, he said he was never mad at me. He just wanted to teach me a lesson about paying attention to details, right? And now I do that. And even with his job, it comes with paying attention to details, especially when you're making orders and everything very important, right? So there's always a reason, right? So graduate BMT got your coin. Great things right. How that feels. Amazing. Yeah, it's up for they said that even if you didn't get the coin, you're liable to get recycled until you put your foot on that bus or that plane.

Yes, yes. They told us similar things, we didn't get the coin back in the day, but the parade day was a big deal. And then you know, you know, base pass in town past, it was always great. Then you go on to tech school. So how was your experience of tech with first day? Actually, first hour when we got there to Keesler, I thought we gotta yelled it. So everybody was all nervous and everything. And then when we got to the actual baseball field on the field, it was like, you know, you can relax right, like now we see you as our peers because now you're not training, urinary me and so as I'm talking to you, that's how I can talk to my MTs. It was chill, felt like Keith for university. I know they don't want to call it Kessler University but it was basically a university. Gotcha. But we make the transition, right? So there's gonna be a natural succession of okay here, I need you to focus here and now I want to open up the door to uh you know, learning, right? So that's where I guess the Keesler you come into, so there's gotta be some good structure, there has to be some rigidity to it, but a little bit more flexibility than BMT. So um what was the good, the bad and ugly of uh tech school. Okay. The good part was I got sleeping on Fridays, we didn't have, apparently they're supposed to have like off days, but every day, every Friday was an off day for us. So I slept in on Fridays. I didn't have a person on my back of my neck. Like go there, go there like, you know, I got to pick and choose who, where I wanted to go. Okay. Gotcha. So just to clarify what FcD hold, what tech school did you go to? Key State University? Which HFC? Uh, embassy? Uh, your three F three or 53 or five. Okay. Gotcha. So you went there for, for that school and okay. What was the ugly of Kessler? It was hot. I didn't like the weather. It was sticky and it was hot. Yeah, I'm from Texas, so I'm familiar with, but I have dry heat. Not what he, where after it rains, it's all McGee and like you can feel your skin and I discussed it still sounds like a pretty good run into a tech school. Uh, I had instructors that were taking bets and if I was going to make it to Leavenworth or not? And when they just thought that was definitely a problem. I know that surprises a few, but not really. So then you, you graduate tech school. How did that go for? How did that feel like a weight lifted? Yeah, I felt amazing. And then when I finally got my certificate, I was like, yes. Okay. Yeah. We didn't know until that morning if we were going to graduate or not. And then they gave us our pens for original uh FC badge and that was a big deal. We have to be in Blues and everything for, it was no full blues. Uh you didn't know if you were going to graduate to that moment. So it was it was a risk taker. So Kessler, did you have like the end of the month where you have to wear the Blues or was that like how is that? We will lose on different rotations. It just depends. Right? So uh it was it was pre 9 11. It was in the nineties and it was a little bit different. But uh it was it was crazy. So for me, if you phase one year to wear blues boat all day and you want to get the phase two then you get to like where your civilian, but you know where your L. C. P. S during the duty. Our yeah it was pretty much it was BTUs and it was pt gear for the first round unless of course we went to class and then that would be Blues on certain days. And then uh just kind of go from there and you know, we had pt back then it was appearing areas to consider the triangle. And we had these old World War two styled multi layered buildings that we uh when you say the triangle talking about like this, the training area. Yes. Uh I think that they've done some changes. They used to have the road through there and it looks like they've done a lot of different upgrades. So that was always good. But uh

different and now you go out of tech school to your first duty station and that's where you are today. You've only been here for about a month, right? So what's that experience has been like you finished all the training and now you're the first duty station? I would say it's a big transition in a good way. I mean, I got now I get to actually be in the operational Air Force and get a feel of how that's actually going and I like it so far. So you found the real Air Force? Yes. Okay, I'm in there you go. There's always rumors of like, well this ain't the real Air force, but finally we found it. Yes. And I mean, I have amazing supervisors and everything and I have an amazing chief. He's a little quirky, but I like awesome. So well with that said, I mean, I really do appreciate anything you, any kind of advice you would want to give to a potential element or your airmen that are coming up behind you right now. I would say this, find out your weakest point when it comes to fitness before going to be anti, whether it be the push ups, sit ups or run and make sure that you maxed out on that pT requirements. So you won't have to worry about it for the upcoming basic training. Awesome. Some great advice. Right? And then always keep your head up. Have those goals and those goals really do mean something we need to make them happen. So we'll evangelism. I really do appreciate your time, your candidness. The fact that you're willing to sit here and chitchat with this quirky gag definitely makes my day helps us share stories about our airman and kind of share those experiences that are happening out there. So thank you for your time. Thank you for having me again. All right, thank you. And then uh Gladiators, thank you for your dedication. Thank you for your sacrifice. Thank you for everything you do throughout the month. And thank you for uh your dedication to this nation. Me and my family greatly appreciate it. Get after it and remember step our enemies in the face through cyberspace.