



NEWS RELEASE

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AMPUTEE HAPPY TO REMAIN AN AIR FORCE ACADEMY CADET

U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo.—"I spent three years here and I'd like to graduate from the Air Force Academy. I really feel like I'm a part of this place."

Cadet First Class (senior) John Bruce Dodds, 20, Vacaville, Calif., summed up the reason he began his successful petition to be graduated from the Academy even though his right leg had been amputated because of cancer.

The Air Force had originally said, after his operation last spring, he could not complete his senior year because cadets must be fully qualified for commissioning. But he was allowed to finish his junior year.

Then Senator Gale McGee, D-Wyo., who appointed Dodds to the Academy, and Representative Teno Roncalio, D-Wyo., sponsored bills in the Senate and House of Representatives to make an exception in Dodds' case. Wednesday (July 17), before Congress acted on the proposals, Secretary of the Air Force John L. McLucas ruled that Dodds could complete his senior year.

"I'm really pleased and surprised that it came through this suddenly. I wasn't expecting anything like this to happen, at least not now," Dodds said trying to put his emotion into words.

He said he learned of the decision Wednesday afternoon from Brigadier General Hoyt S. Vandenberg Jr., commandant of cadets. Dodds said he was speechless for a while after Vandenberg informed him of the ruling. His happy parents had learned of the ruling before.

"The entire Air Force Academy community is pleased to learn that Cadet Bruce Dodds will be able to graduate with his class next June," said Lieutenant General A.P. Clark, Academy superintendent.

"All of us have been impressed with the character of this fine young man. His courage since he lost his leg to cancer last April has been an inspiration to all of us. He is a dedicated young man who believes in the Academy, the Air Force and most importantly, his country.

"While it has been made to appear that the Air Force Academy took a strong stand against allowing Mr. Dodds to finish his four-year program here, I should point out that Air Force policy in such matters is clear and the decision to grant an exception in his case had to be made in Washington.

"The Academy is very pleased with the outcome," Clark said.

Dodds is currently working in the administrative offices for the Class of 1978's basic cadet training (BCT). Junior and senior cadets run BCT, with assistance from training officers and NCOs.

When his stint with BCT is finished next week, Dodds will enter the "Third Lieutenant" program to work with active-duty officers at Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

Dodds will begin academics with the rest of the Cadet Wing Aug. 14. He is majoring in political science and history and hopes to enter law school as a civilian following graduation.

"I can do most anything the rest of the guys can," Dodds said. "I can't go on the morning run, but I can still play some sports." He was president of the cadet mountaineering club before his operation and he hopes he can still participate in the club's activities.

Dodds credits the favorable decision in part to fellow cadets. "There was everything from guys writing to—I don't know—just everything they could do," the cadet said.

He also realizes the attention his case received in the news media played a part, but he didn't know the interest would be so widespread when he applied to remain at the Academy.

"I would rather just remain anonymous," he said.