

# So. . . . , You're Going to DISAM

By

**J. Bruce Parker**

As I was driving west on Interstate 70, I thought about what had taken place to allow me to attend the Case Management Course at DISAM. After diligently filling out my DD Form 1556, our personnel officer processed it for approval. Five months later, I received a student packet in the mail welcoming me to something called SAM-CM-6-88. In plain English, I was selected to attend the DISAM June 1988 class for Case Management. To get to DISAM, you may fly from your home station to Dayton International Airport, or choose to drive your own vehicle (POV). I chose the latter option, and as I turned off of I-70 onto Ohio Highways 4 and 235 approaching Wright-Patterson AFB, I thought that a nice shower and nap would do me good before dinner. The first glimpse of the base, coming in from the northeast, is an impressive row of C-135 and C-141 aircraft adjacent to the runway.

As I came to the stoplight and turned right to go through the small town of Fairborn, I was amazed at the myriad of fast-food establishments that bordered the highway. Take your choice, you fast-food junkies--you won't starve here! On your right are Friendly's, Dunkin' Donuts, Cassano's, Bonanza, Ponderosa, Wendy's, Arby's, and Hardee's. On the left are Damon's Place for Ribs, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Frisco Freddie's, Long John Silver's, Pizza Hut, McDonald's, Taco Bell, and Western Sizzlin'. Admittedly, not all of these places are strictly fast-food, but there is a wide variety from which to choose. Fairborn is a small, friendly community that acts as host for the Air Base as well as for neighboring Wright State University. In my week there, I found plenty to occupy my free time, and the people were very friendly.

As I turned at Gate 9A, I noticed the Base Hospital. Currently in the process of a major remodeling and expansion program, this impressive structure is the second largest hospital in the Air Force. I had the feeling that if I needed medical attention, I would be properly attended to there. The hospital, the housing, and the ground maintenance were all in good order--very clean and well cared for. My next step was to drive to Building 825 to register in the Visiting Officer's Quarters office. VOQ policy calls for arrivals prior to 1800; please telephone them if you expect to arrive after that hour. I was billeted in Building 836, Room 8206. The room was as nice as a good hotel room off base. The rooms are large, with color TV and many cable channels provided for your enjoyment. If you would like any premium movie channels, they are available at your expense through the local cable company.

My room had a single bathroom with shower/tub, but I've also stayed in other buildings where bathrooms are shared with two rooms. As I had decided earlier, I took a nice long shower to relax and cool down from the long drive and the summer heat. The temperature all week long was in the mid to upper 90's, unusually warm for June. Once showered, I took a short nap and went out to have a nice quiet dinner before turning in to bed early. Monday morning's schedule required all DISAM students to report to their classrooms at 0800. I wanted to get a good night's sleep and be ready to start the week off right.

Well, Monday morning came, and at 0800 I was in my designated seat for the beginning of the Case Management Course. DISAM does a good job of helping everyone get to know each other quickly by placing name plates on all the desks. Additionally, they provide each student with a handout showing the seating position for all students. DISAM is very good at disseminating the information needed to all students during the time you are there. The DISAM staff was gracious enough to wait until 0805 before starting off the class with opening remarks by Dr. Larry

Mortsof, Director of Academic Affairs. We were told that we were attending the 43rd iteration of the Case Management Course, which was introduced in 1982. Since that time, there have been nearly 1300 graduates from that course.

We also met Ms. Jo Ann Wright, the DISAM Registrar, who proceeded to provide us with a myriad of administrative instructions. These varied from information regarding our orders, our meals, BX privileges, and the validation of our Forms 1556 so we would get our all important diplomas at the end of the week!

We then were introduced to our Class Manager for the week, Dr. Dave Carey, who is the department chairman for International Programs. Dave was a real asset to our class and was extremely patient and helpful, no matter how dumb the question may have seemed. At DISAM, there are no dumb questions! Dave had Air Force experience in security assistance with the International Logistics Center prior to his current position with DISAM. When all the introductions were completed, it was time to start working. What's that? No class yet? Class picture? I guess it is a DISAM tradition to have a class picture taken for each class. After all, this is school, right? Sorry, no yearbook yet. After the picture taking session was complete, we all took a break and then each student got a chance to introduce himself or herself and give a short synopsis of their security assistance backgrounds. Our class had representatives from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the Security Assistance Accounting Center.

The first thing I noticed while attending classes at DISAM is the overwhelming amount of new acronyms one is faced with when getting together with the other services. The Navy and Air Force have a whole set of special acronyms to express their security assistance terminology which differs from those of the U.S. Army. I am sure the Army acronyms overwhelmed them too! It was comforting to know that all members of the DISAM staff were equal to the task of anticipating all of our puzzled looks and to explain the myriad of acronyms to us. I must confess, I once had a secret goal in mind to learn every acronym to be found. Talk about being naive! Anyway, we all survived this first hurdle in the course and proceeded to break up into our separate military service seminar groups to discuss our own service-unique situations. Each seminar had a group facilitator from DISAM who has expertise for that service or military department.

Once we moved into smaller rooms and the seminar groups got down to a more intimate level, I sensed some of the shyer class members beginning to open up and participate to a greater degree. The seminars are asked to provide examples of "real world" security assistance situations they have encountered. The benefit here is twofold: 1) the problem will probably get solved right in class, and 2) everyone in the seminar will benefit from the problem-solving exercise and carry that knowledge back to their jobs. All of the instructors, such as Charlie Collins, our Army seminar facilitator, have a keen ability to recognize when the class is going well, and when that tired or boring look has set in for the moment. Charlie often elevated the discussion with a few "oneliners" and lots of body motion to liven things up and keep it all interesting for the class. Charlie is a very outgoing individual who does a good job of letting his likeable personality carry over into the classroom. If that fails, there is the all important BREAK to stretch our legs, get something to drink, or just relax for 10-15 minutes.

After the break-up of our Army seminar, we received a lecture on Security Assistance Planning by Dr. Lou Samelson, who is the department chairman for Research and Information. We then had a class discussion regarding case analysis with Mr. Frank Campanell providing instruction. During the case analysis segment, we experienced a temporary power failure due to high temperatures incurred during the summer drought that was broiling the Midwest. Fortunately, we were able to continue with the minimal lighting provided for emergency power failures. The lowest daytime temperature during my week at DISAM was in the high 80's. After we completed our first day of class, I quickly changed into my gym clothes and went to the base gymnasium for a little basketball and weightlifting. I kept my workout to a minimum due to the

high heat and humidity. Dodge Gym is located next to the Officer's Club and provides base personnel with the opportunity to participate in many sports. Basketball, racquetball, aerobics, swimming, weightlifting, and billiards are some of the offerings provided. Later, I ate dinner and read some of Tuesday's homework before retiring for the night.

The second day of class begins with--you guessed it, administrative announcements. We then continued to discuss case analysis with Mr. Campanell. Then we broke up into our seminar groups to continue our service-unique discussions. Before going any further, I have to mention that our Army seminar facilitator, Mr. Charlie Collins is a retired U.S. Army Major. We had to put up with the obligatory "war stories" based on his career. Charlie successfully walked the fine line between interest and boredom as he sensed we could take no more. On with our seminar discussions. We delved into some deep discussions that helped everyone understand and appreciate the other person's perspective with regards to how the Major Subordinate Commands view the U.S. Army Security Affairs Command (USASAC), both in Alexandria and New Cumberland, and visa versa. We completed that portion of the seminar with a deeper appreciation for each other's functions and responsibilities. Later that evening, I should have done Wednesday's homework, but game seven of the National Basketball Association Finals was being televised. Need I say more?

Wednesday went much like the first two days. We continued to meet as a class to discuss common subjects and then we broke up into our seminars to discuss pertinent issues for each service. Again, Thursday was a repeat of the previous days, but with a big difference. Everyone was beginning to hone their minds for the final day's academic contest between the Air Force, Army, and Navy. The tournament was upon us, and we suddenly only had one more day to prepare! How can I describe this to you? The best analogy I can think of is the TV show "Family Feud." Using a clock to monitor equal response times for all combatants, uh, I mean student contestants, the DISAM team deftly prepared us to start the contest. The questions were shown via an overhead projector. When the team signaled they were ready to begin, each question was displayed and the clock started counting out those 60 precious seconds. There are four possible answers to each question. There are always more than four possible answers, but we had to provide the four answers previously selected by the DISAM faculty. The playing team had 60 seconds to get as many of the answers as possible. If the playing team got less than four correct answers, the other team was afforded an opportunity to "steal" points by getting one opportunity to answer within a fifteen second time limit. They could continue to "steal" points until they gave a wrong answer or completed all four parts of the question.

Friday! Tournament day, departure day, and yes, the last day of administrative announcements! We took care of packing up all of our student materials to send back to our own offices. We were also given an opportunity to ask any last minute questions regarding the pending contest that awaited us. After taking lunchtime for a bite to eat and a chance to relax, we then reconvened. This time we were seated Navy on the left, Air Force in the middle, and Army to the right. It was time to begin. Each service had its strategy set. The first encountered was Army vs Navy. Navy proved the winner in the round, twelve to seven. The next round was Navy vs Air Force. Air Force came up with a tight thirteen to twelve win. Navy had not completed its two rounds and had a point total of 24. Air Force had 13, with Army trailing at 7. The last round and the last chance for Army was now against the Air Force. Could the Army come from behind to defeat the other two services? The answer was a resounding NO! Air Force prevailed in the final round fourteen to ten. The final scores were Air Force 27, Navy 24, and Army 17. Although the competition was vigorous, it was all in good fun.

Everyone was now presented with their certificates of training for the DISAM Case Management Course. Hurried good-byes were said by all to the many new friends that were made during the week. Since I had arrived in my own car, I made my way off base and drove through

Fairborn and past the Air Base to I-70 and homeward. The drive home gave me time to reflect upon my week at DISAM.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. J. Bruce Parker is currently serving as a Training Technician for the Security Assistance Training Field Activity, Training and Doctrine Command (SATFA-TRADOC) in their Washington Field Office, Alexandria, Virginia. He formerly worked as an Education Specialist with the PM-SANG project in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for nearly four years. Prior to his tour in Saudi Arabia, Mr. Parker served for five years as an Education Specialist at the Soldier Support Institute, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, serving on the original task force that planned the current Physical Fitness School in 1982.