

# Invaluable Staff Makes for Invaluable Training at Hawk Mountain

*Ranger School Welcomes New Class This July*

*By Mitzi Palmer*

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Before Civil Air Patrol cadets begin their weeklong stay at Hawk Mountain Ranger School, they are told it won't be easy — both physically and mentally. There are no modern conveniences. That means no electricity, no warm showers and sleeping in tents regardless of weather conditions.

The first several days of school start promptly at 6 a.m. Cadets are led through physical training and an obstacle course. Then it's on to learning about techniques used in team searches, navigation, cutting tools, survival and woodsmanship skills — to name a few.

But no matter how difficult it may be, cadets and officers continue to say their experiences in the wilderness of Kempton, Pa., during Hawk Mountain are some of the most rewarding of their CAP careers.



Dr. Ralph Jones leads a medic class in physiology and anatomy at Hawk Mountain Ranger School.

## *56 Years*

This July marks the 56th year for Hawk Mountain, the longest-running search and rescue school in the nation.

Not only is it known for providing some of the best search and rescue training in the country, the school has also become one of the most intense and professionally fulfilling summer activities CAP has to offer.

“What makes us unique is that while most other

schools take place in classrooms, the duration of Hawk Mountain Ranger School takes place outside in the same conditions as a real mission,” said Montana Wing Commander Col. Herb Cahalen, the school’s commander.

Cahalen has been involved with Hawk Mountain as a staff member since 1964.

“There are still staff members that were there as officers when I started as a cadet,” he said. “We are like one big family. We push everyone who becomes a staff member to take ownership of the mountain, because it’s up to them to ensure the quality of the training is top of the line.”

The staff team at Hawk Mountain represents a wide range of disciplines — military, medical, law enforcement, business, safety, construction, engineering and aviation science.

“It makes for a well-rounded program,” Cahalen said.

## *Invaluable Training, Staff*

Staff members like Dr. Ralph Jones are key to providing the invaluable training Hawk Mountain offers, Cahalen said.

A former CAP member and now base medical officer, Jones attended Hawk Mountain as a cadet in 1971 with Cahalen as his basic squadron cadet commander.

“Over time, I participated in basic winter school, advanced winter school, the first medical school and advanced summer school,” Jones said. “By 1973, I was on the staff as a cadet medic, and I served as the advanced medic for three years during both the winter and summer schools.”

A couple of years later, he joined the U.S. Navy as a hospital corpsman, transferred to senior status and was assigned to duty in Japan for four years. After his return to the States, Jones served at Hawk Mountain

once again as a senior medic from 1980 to 1983 while attending Penn State University. After graduation, he was commissioned into the Navy Medical Corps, and he stayed on the Hawk Mountain staff during the summer for three years.

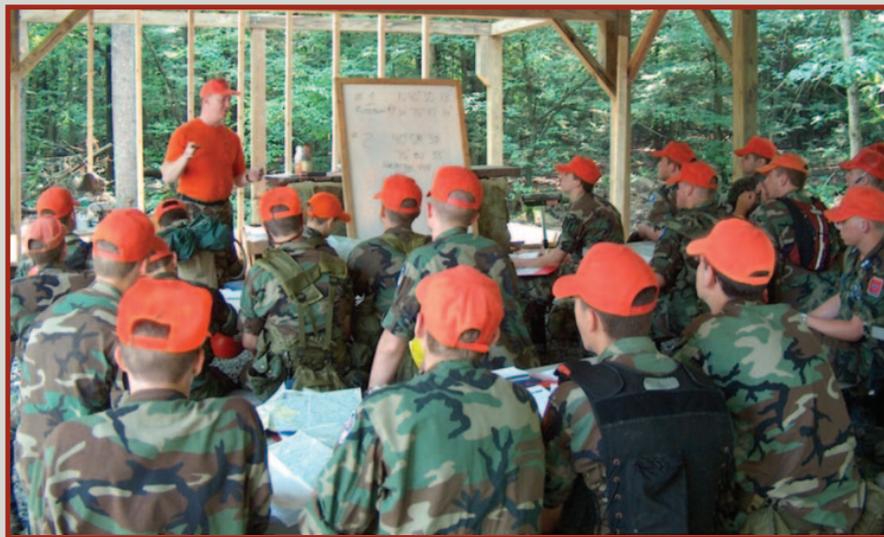
“Because medical training and my military career required long hours and dedication, I lost touch with CAP until 1999, when I was invited to a retreat at Col. Cahalen’s cabin for expert rangers and master medics,” Jones said. “It didn’t take long to see the light, and I was invited back on the staff as base medical officer.”

Jones has served faithfully in this role ever since. Over the last 10 years, he has helped the program establish an excellent base medical facility with two emergent care beds and the capability to initiate basic life support and bridge wilderness with urban advanced life support and minor office and emergent procedures.

“It makes a real impact on the attendees,” he noted.

Jones, chief of surgical oncology at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, attributed his successful military and medical careers to the training he received at Hawk Mountain.

“Self-discipline, leadership, responsibility, dedication and service to others was the foundation,” he said. “The mentoring and refinement of my abilities I owe to the many men and women who fostered me through the



Lt. Col. Sean Neal of the New York Wing teaches a navigation class at Hawk Mountain.

rigors of the ranger program.”

Since his first ranger school experience at Hawk Mountain, Jones has been placed in several life-altering situations that required precise reaction—including serving as the medical ground team leader at Ground Zero after the World Trade Center attacks in 2001.

“Too many people were ill-prepared, not informed of the Federal Response Plan and lacked training in organizational chaos,” he said. “CAP prepared me well for that assignment.

“There are few programs for youth that prepare one for life, mentor the process of leadership and permit young people to actually run operations. Hawk Mountain is invaluable and the reason I have given back to the school more than I will ever attempt to recover.” ▲

*To learn more about Hawk Mountain Ranger School, visit [pawg.cap.gov/hawk\\_mountain](http://pawg.cap.gov/hawk_mountain).*



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