Coming Soon:

The first feature-length documentary to explore cadet life at the Academy

By **David Bergeman**

Based on the experiences of cadets at the United States Air Force Academy, *Wings of Honor* (working title) is nearing completion, and many are excited to see the film reach its final destination. The soon to be released documentary chronicles the travails and triumphs of some extraordinary cadets, a few being upperclassmen, but the majority of whom are doolies hailing from USAFA's Tiger 10 Squadron.

Filming for the Boeing-sponsored documentary began at the Academy in June of 2010 and continued intermittently through July of 2011. "I'm pretty sure we've gotten the best access of anybody who's ever been in there," said Producer/Supervising Editor David Emrich of Postmodern Company. All told, 280 hours of footage were shot over 135 days of filming.

Wings of Honor will be a unique departure from much of the other work that has been produced about the Academy, most of which has focused on the history and architecture of the institution. "When people make films about the Academy," Emrich explained, "they have a tendency to be about *the Academy* rather than the cadets. We feel very strongly that the quality of the cadets' stories show the power and the strength of the Academy."

Emrich said that the filmmakers interviewed doolies the night before in-processing and followed them as they made the turbulent adjustment to life at the Academy. Everything a cadet experiences: dorm life, academics, athletics, relationship issues–all of it was captured on film. "We get to see how these kids change in that year, in the first six weeks we see them change," Emrich laughed. "But in reality the quality of the cadets is such that we think this is the best way to tell the story of what the Academy is and what it does."

One of the many storylines that captured Emrich's imagination involves the rigor of the cadet Academic experience. "A string that we follow is how as a freshman you are learning to build rockets," Emrich said. He then described how the documentary brings the story full circle by transporting viewers to Alaska for the rocket launch of a satellite that is being tracked by firsties at the Academy. "For me, as an outsider looking in, I'm thinking, as a senior in college, I wouldn't be tracking a satellite!"

The 125-day edit of *Wings of Honor* is scheduled to be completed in early April. Those involved with the film are expecting that it will be released in theaters as a nation-wide one-night event, although there may be other options for the film's distribution such as network television. "We want to be sure to do right by Boeing, the Air Force Academy and the Air Force," Emrich said, in regards to the film's release. No matter how you see it, be sure to expect some exquisite story telling come spring and a film that will make everyone associated with the Academy proud. ☑