An integral part of my character, resolve, and leadership has been molded within black leather boots and shining red tunic. This is the standard parade uniform for the 142 Saint Andrew’s College Highland Cadet Corps, worn on three momentous parades in the school year, the culmination of hours and weeks of drill and practice. To gather a body of over six hundred teenage boys to left turn, right turn, and come to attention for four hours a week is no simple task indeed. One might wonder how such a task would be possible without dedicated *Staff Cadets*, students themselves, at the very core of the hierarchical leadership system, working together to discipline and coerce the masses of, mostly, rowdy and disgruntled boys. Indeed, it wouldn’t.

Of course, just as there are good employees and bad employees in a business, so there are good Staff Cadets and, perhaps, less effective members of the core.

Some Staff Cadets are fraught with a timidity that is quickly exploited by disorderly members of their platoon. Others simply lack motivation and interest for the job, spreading their indolence like a cancer down the ranks.

I would like to think that I was one of the good ones.

At the beginning of Grade 11, I was excited to discover that my request for a position as a *Sergeant* had been granted. I remember first setting my eyes upon my platoon of twenty-three Grade 9 students, watching them watch me, knowing that every success and mistake would feed into their mental record books of this supposedly superior cadet who would be leading and instructing them for the rest of the term. I suppose a teacher on his very first day would have felt much the same. For that was my role for the next six months - a teacher.

Once a week, two hours a week, we would gather in a lighted classroom. The boys would arrange themselves so that they could play on their computers unnoticed while I pointed at a projected PowerPoint and spoke, with about half of them having the courtesy to glance upwards every once in a while and pretend they were listening. Though my voice did not tremble, my hands and legs often did. I would stutter and lose my train of thought, overwhelmed by the people I was supposed to teach.

But things got better.