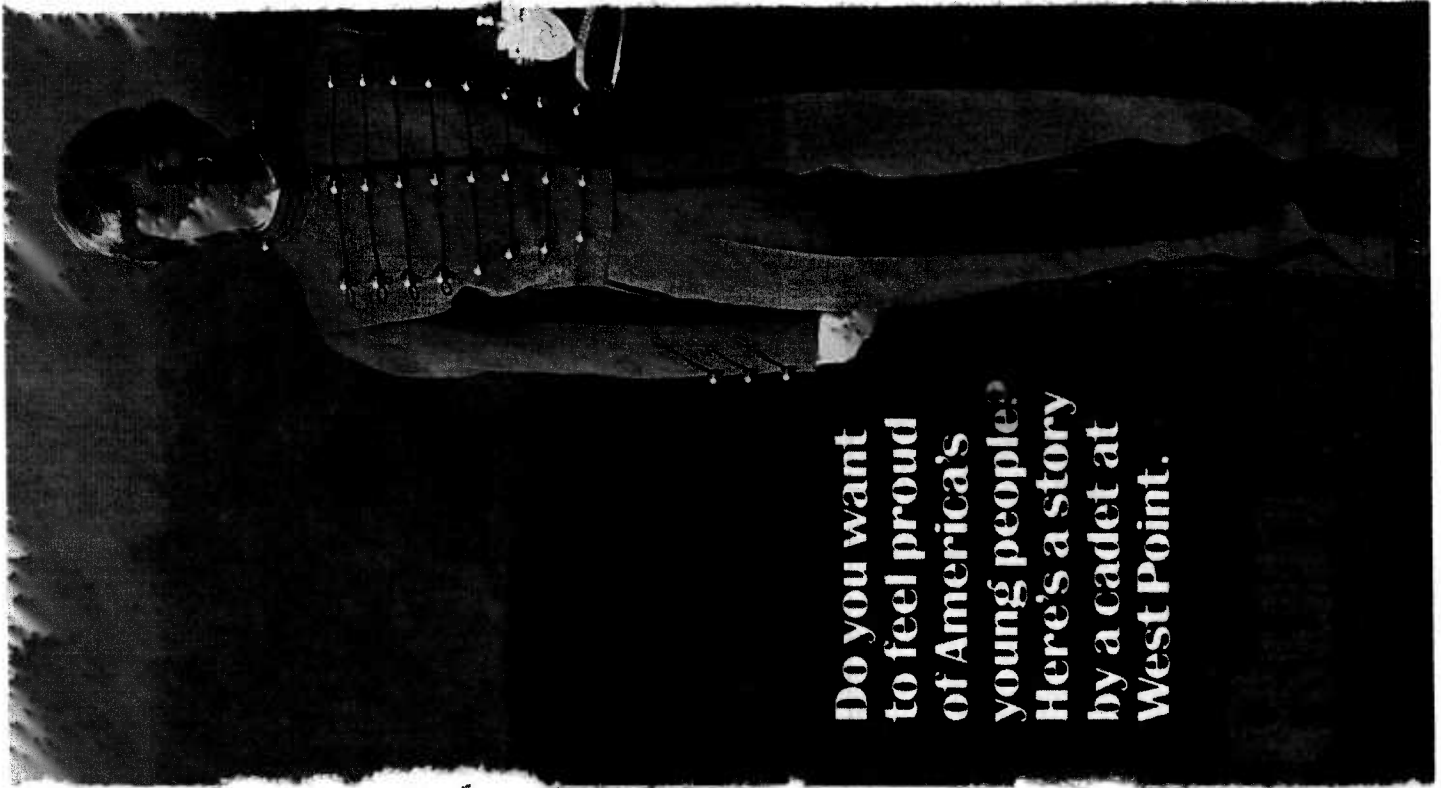


Reading this Mar/83 GUIDEPOSTS piece, open on our breakfast table, a just-retired visitor, who'd complained of procrastination, said "That might solve my problem."



Do you want to feel proud of America's young people? Here's a story by a cadet at West Point.

but I did want to run well enough to win. "How fast will you have to run to win a race?" I'd ask myself. And my desire to be fast would push me on. It took a while. I didn't increase my speed in weeks or even months. But I did begin to have a sense of accomplishment after each run. Eventually, I found that running was also an outlet, a way to release nervous energy or frustration. Later, much later, running became a joy — a time of expression, freedom and power. Through discipline, it became part of me.

One day as I jogged along on my training run, it came to me that daily practice — training — was what my spiritual life needed. I had to have a set plan to follow every day — for praying, reading my Bible and doing at least one kind thing for someone else.

Since then, I've discovered that daily faith practice, like running, isn't always comfortable or convenient. It's sometimes painful — and occasionally people think I'm weird. As for time, learning about God and living His will isn't a matter of weeks or months. It's an every-day-of-my-life commitment.

But from this daily discipline, I find that my spiritual life is becoming an outlet, a way to unwind, a means of solving problems, and a source of comfort when I'm down. It doesn't help me only when I'm troubled — it gives me confidence that I'm making myself useful. I have a sense of peace and contentment that's new to me.

Do you know what I've learned? Sometimes you may not feel like praying or reading the Bible or going out of your way to help others. But, if you're in training — physical or spiritual — you'll do it.

Maybe it was a childlike idea, but for many years I figured that if you loved God, if you thought of yourself as a Christian, then of course you would read your Bible, you'd pray, you'd do loving things. I thought that God would simply see to it that you had these overwhelming instincts.

Actually, I was bothered by this concept as I was growing up because, even though I was raised in a Christian home and had accepted Christ, I knew that there were always times when I *didn't* want to pray, or read my Bible. And I often found it difficult to be loving to people I *loved*, much less those people who irritated me.

I now believe that God is not going to insist that we love Him or pray a certain way or do certain things to help others. It's up to every one of us to decide these matters for ourselves. And the best way to get into harmony with Him, I believe, is through Christian discipline. Oddly enough, this realization came to me one day while I was out on a training run.

I'm a distance runner and I like to compete in races. On this particular day, I didn't *feel* like running at all, but I made myself — because running is a sport you have to practice every day. I wanted to win races, so I had a set plan for training:

- Run daily, even if you don't feel like it.
- Run daily, even if you sometimes have to skip fun and pleasure.
- Run daily, even in bad weather — even if people think you're weird.
- Run daily, even when it gives you aches and pains and you feel like quitting.
- Run daily, even if you don't feel it's doing you any good.

At first, I didn't enjoy daily training —

I Make Myself
by Karen S. Phelps, West Point, New York