**Tackling SFAS**

2016

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My goal in getting ready for SFAS was admittedly to learn everything I possibly could.  That approach doesn’t work for everyone, but it worked for me.  The more I knew and the more I thought things out, the more relaxed and better prepared I was.

Making life at SFAS as easy as possible under the circumstances was also a focus of my preparation.  You have limited time and energy (emotional and physical), and I found taking care of a lot of the little things below was key.

Finally, everything is subject to change: rules change, timetables changes, the SFAS operating environment changes. So always compare the info here with the latest from SWCS and those who have recently returned.

Though this doesn’t reveal any secrets, it is nonetheless a comprehensive list of what I did, or what I wish I had done in some cases, that helped me be successful. I am an officer, but I believe all the below will apply to anyone of any rank.  I encourage you to read it soon, in case you need to order something in time for your start date.

GOOD LUCK!

***EQUIPMENT TO BRING*** *– There seemed to be no limit of how much authorized stuff you can take*

**A Really Good Book** – *There is a surprising amount of time hanging out in the barracks trying to stay awake, so bringing a book that will inspire or take your mind off things is critical.  I brought Into Thin Air about the tragic climb up Mount Everest and it was the perfect book…highly recommended.*
  -  <http://www.amazon.com/Into-Thin-Air-Personal-Disaster/dp/0385492081?ie=UTF8&psc=1&redirect=true&ref_=oh_aui_detailpage_o05_s00>

**An Inspirational Photo and Quote** – *I brought a photo of the trails where would ruck three times a week to remind me of how hard I had worked to get there. I also brought a laminated quotation by Tony Robbins about hard work. I looked at these several times a day and always before a big event. They did a lot to focus and reassure me of what I had to do.*

**3-4 Combination Padlocks** – *one for each bag and one for the wall locker/s. I recommend ones with four dials that you can set to a combination of your choice. If you’re worried about time, you can just rotate one dial to lock it, though that’s less secure.*

**Sleep System** – *I brought mine, but CIF can issue you a complete one as well when you get there.  However, if you have one, I would take it.*

**A Woobie Converted into a Sleeping Bag** – *I always loved doing this with my woobies. By folding your woobie in half and sewing a sleeping-bag zipper along two sides of it, you can convert your woobie into a lightweight sleeping bag. Brigade Quartermaster used to sell a kit, but I think they stopped. I made mine by ordering a sleeping-bag replacement zipper online and then sewing it on myself. I believe this is standard with USMC woobies.*

**Sheets and Pillows** *– You can bring your own sheets and a pillow and those who did slept like kings/queens.  I would recommend bringing at least a fitted sheet for a twin/full bed and your favorite pillow.*

*Woobie Sleeping Bag*

**Canteen Cleaner** *– It’s up to you, but the canteens you are issued were used by 100 other Soldiers before you, so something like hydrogen peroxide or other sterilizing solution can help make it a little cleaner.***Gloves** *– A light pair of gloves for general stuff (walking during LandNav) and the issue heavy, black-leather work gloves for team week are great.  They also issued us the white repelling gloves at CIF, which will work as well.***Three+ Sets of Eye Pro** *– Set yourself up for success with a fresh pair of eye pro for each day of the Star LandNav course. Also, wrap all glasses in scratch-resistant cloth or bags when inside a case. I failed to do this and ended up with my new glasses being badly scratched, even though they were cased.*

**Glasses Defogger** *– If there’s a product that will keep eye pro from fogging up, I would get it.  Once I started sweating, by eye pro fogged up and I couldn’t see anything.*

**Two+ Headlamps** *– Losing your one-and-only headlamp can be really bad, so bring two.  If you can find one that has both Red and Blue lights, that would be the best as different colors can help show off different features of the map and especially anything marked with a highlighter. Interestingly, headlamps with a purple-ish light meant for tracking blood can work exceptionally well. Run some tests to get to know what works best: highlight a piece of paper, turn off the lights, and see how the highlights look under different colored lights. For example, blue highlights will disappear under blue light, so plan accordingly.*

**Highlighters for the Map** *– You can bring map markers, but I would also bring a five-color pack of highlighters for marking boundaries, draws, and points of interest on your map; you can mark the map anyway you want.*

**Pen Light** – *I always felt better with more, so I took two AAA pen lights (one Blue, one Red) as backups for my two headlamps.*

**Liquid Biodegradable Detergent** – *You will be doing any washing in a big sink and I found liquid detergent worked best. Do the right thing by the environment and buy only biodegradable detergent – Dr. Bronner’s Organic Pure Castile Liquid Soap (Baby Unscented) can be used for anything and is great.  Also a scrub brush comes in handy.*

**One Clean Uniform with Engineer Tape** – *After you are selected, you will be in a lot of briefings, so it’s good to either keep one of your four taped uniforms relatively clean or have a fifth one ready to go.  I had nothing but trashed uniforms and it was kinda embarrassing.*

**Extra Stuff for Others** – *Being generous and supportive of those around you is a great way to bond.  I brought a 1,000-foot role of 550 cord, hung it on the end of my bunk, and encouraged everyone to help themselves.  I also hung a bottle of sunscreen and a muscle roller there for people to use.  It worked very well.*

**Clear 2” Packing Tape** – *A roll of this, the same width as 100 mph tape, is great for making quick laminations.  After writing your roster number on the 100 mph tape, cover it with the clear tape and it will never fade.*

**Two 2-Quart Straws, One for Each 2-Quart Canteen** – *Can’t imagine life without them…a must-have.*
  -  <http://www.amazon.com/Rothco-602-Canteen-Straw-Kit/dp/B001DKY1KG?ie=UTF8&psc=1&redirect=true&ref_=oh_aui_search_detailpage>

**Camelbak Hydrolink Hydration Conversion Kit Bite Valve for 2-Quart Straws** – *The ones that come with the straws are very bad so use these.*
  -  <http://www.amazon.com/CamelBak-90512-HydroLink-Conversion-Black/dp/B001LQWIB6?ie=UTF8&keywords=camelbak%20bite%20valve&qid=1459108068&ref_=sr_1_17_a_it&sr=8-17>

**MOLLE Web Dominators with Elastic Cord for Holding your Canteen Straws** – *Another little bit of equipment that made life so much easier for me was putting two of these on the sternum straps of my ruck and using them to retain the two hoses of my 2-quart straws.*
  -  <http://www.amazon.com/BCP-MOLLE-Dominators-Elastic-String/dp/B0116STCBW?ie=UTF8&psc=1&redirect=true&ref_=oh_aui_detailpage_o01_s01>

**Band-Aids and Hand Sanitizer** – *Just good to have for cleaning and protecting any cuts.  Things don’t heal well out there.*

**Moisturizer** – *Your skin will take a beating at Selection with numerous cuts and abrasions. In addition to Band-Aids, I would take hand crème and body lotion. Taking the time to properly help yourself heal every evening and whenever opportunities arise pays big dividends. I even slept with moistening gloves on after applying hand crème – a tip from a Ranger student.*

**Lots of Socks** – *I took twenty pairs – nearly one per day – and could have taken more.  Once they get dirty/salty, they won’t treat your feet as well and washing them can be a pain.*

**FoxRiver Socks** – *I wasn’t a sock guy, but I tried them and will probably never go back to the regular Army ones.  They are nicely padded, offer foot support, function well when wet, and dry fast.  This is just what I used…there are other good ones out there too.*
  -  <https://www.foxsox.com/catalog/product.aspx?type=subcategory&sortorder=stylenumber&code=MILBT&selectedstyle=6036>

**Nice Kit Bag** – *To make life as easy as possible and thus maximize my emotional and physical energy at SFAS, I treated myself to the best kit bag I could find:  a jumbo zippered kit bag with multiple compartments and wheels called the Sandpiper of California Rolling Loadout Luggage X-Large Bag.  You will move several times at SFAS and you will be constantly diving in and out of your bag for stuff with often little time to find it.  This kit bag made life easy and was the envy of many Soldiers there.  For overflow equipment that I never used, I used the standard Army-issue top-loading duffel and kept it under my bunk.  If you don’t want to shell out the bucks for the fancy kit bag, the giant zippered duffel (also below) is an adequate alternative.  I actually took that as well, in case they said “no” to the wheeled kit bag…but they didn’t. – NOTE: I would only travel with military bags when absolutely necessary…it’s not safe these days to spotlight yourself as a Serviceman.*
  -  Sandpiper Kit Bag:  <http://www.amazon.com/Sandpiper-California-Rolling-Loadout-15-5x37x17-Inch/dp/B004HPE91K?ie=UTF8&psc=1&redirect=true&ref_=oh_aui_detailpage_o07_s00>

  -  Giant Duffle:  <http://www.amazon.com/Rothco-Canvas-Zipper-Duffle-Olive/dp/B000FBWYOO?ie=UTF8&psc=1&redirect=true&ref_=oh_aui_detailpage_o06_s00>

**Trash Bags** – *Take a couple…can make a good waterproof bag if needed.*

**Storage bags** – *I used several of the oversized plastic bags with the one-way air valves for storing uniforms in my kit bag.  Made things easier to find.*

**Two gallon bags** – *I would take at least 5 of them.*

**100 MPH Tape** – *Take some…you will need it. It even did well in protecting my feet from blisters in high-friction areas.  I also took a piece of cardboard and wrapped about 5 feet of tape around it and kept in my pocket.  It was great as I often needed a piece in the field.*

**Two Sets of Flip Flops** – *A tiny pair you leave in your ruck, and another you leave in the bay for heading to the latrine.*

**Extra Fleece Caps and Neck Gators** – *I took three of each as I was in the winter class. There’s nothing’s sadder than losing your fleece cap (or gator), especially in the chilly evenings.*

**Bring a Little Extra Engineer Tape** – *You can’t have a lot of it, but there will be someone who needs it for their uniform and will be glad you have it.  Plus, you will need about a foot of it for putting your number on the road guard vest.*

***MENTALLY PREPARE BEFORE YOU GO***

*The bad news is that you’ll be under some kind of stress at all times at SFAS. The good news is that it’s all in your head and therefore you have some control over it. Stress is a person’s reaction to a situation. The cadre put you in situations that they know will stress a typical person. Therefore, strengthening your mental endurance and ability to handle stress will dictate your experience at SFAS. We’ve all heard that SFAS is “all a mental game,” but how much time do we spend working on our minds and emotions versus spending time in the gym? There are lots of techniques that work extremely well at SFAS and elsewhere in life. The below are what worked for me and for thousands of others throughout, like, all of time.*

**Learn Meditation and Relaxation / Breathing Techniques** - *What’s amazing about learning these techniques is that you can do them anywhere, anytime and they really work. Meditation and deep breathing can turn off the sympathetic nervous system, the fight-or-flight response, and help activate the parasympathetic nervous system which calms us. Even something as simple as Eckhart Tolle’s technique of “taking one conscious breath,” a single deep breath where you bring your attention to only that breath, can calm you on a physiological level. An example of this is action is recounted by the SF Soldier who remianed calm in a firefight. He would pop up, shoot, go back down, take a single conscious breath, and then come up and shoot again. In that way, he was able to function at optimal levels.*

*Here are some resources that helped me, though there are many others out there and I encourage you to explore on your own:*

 *1. How to Meditate -* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wirV265ZYSw*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wirV265ZYSw)

 *2. Calming your Sympathetic Nervous System -* [*http://www.newsmax.com/Health/Headline/anxiety-vegus-nerve-stimulation-brainstem/2014/09/15/id/594746/*](http://www.newsmax.com/Health/Headline/anxiety-vegus-nerve-stimulation-brainstem/2014/09/15/id/594746/) *4-7-8 Breathing Technique for Relaxation -* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRPh\_GaiL8s*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRPh_GaiL8s)

 *3. Breath Walking -* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGkHVEnpVoY&nohtml5=False*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGkHVEnpVoY&nohtml5=False)

 *5. Meditation Apps for Android/iPhone*

 *- Insight Timer*

 *- Headspace*

**Listen to Experts on Emotional Wellbeing** – *Your emotions are one of the biggest factors at SFAS. Learn the techniques to harness their power. These are what helped me:*

 *1. Tony Robbins’ Hour of Power -* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3bvYhm7qcg&nohtml5=False*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3bvYhm7qcg&nohtml5=False)

 *2. Believe yourself to be already selected -* [*http://unleashyourinnerstrength.com/the-%E2%80%9Ci-already-have-it-i-already-am-it%E2%80%9D-technique/*](http://unleashyourinnerstrength.com/the-%E2%80%9Ci-already-have-it-i-already-am-it%E2%80%9D-technique/)

 *3. Staying in your “Flow State” -* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jE1j5Om7g0U*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jE1j5Om7g0U) *and* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1MHyyWsMeE*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1MHyyWsMeE)

 *4. Learning to learn from your mistakes -* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN34FNbOKXc*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN34FNbOKXc)

**Listen to Motivational Speeches on Hard Work** - *Anything that talked about the benefits of pure hard work or “Rise and Grind” was good for me. These are what helped me but there are many more great ones out there:*

 *1. The Best Motivational Video Speeches Compilation 2015 - 1 Hour Long -* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9V6BDnu35qs&nohtml5=False*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9V6BDnu35qs&nohtml5=False)

 *2. Be Fearless -* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjjYVROiJIA&nohtml5=False*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjjYVROiJIA&nohtml5=False)

 *3. Prove them Wrong -* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPQ1budJRIQ&index=13&list=PL9XDPqN8lxBphPe-jqlu6cRejGpd54oqA&nohtml5=False*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPQ1budJRIQ&index=13&list=PL9XDPqN8lxBphPe-jqlu6cRejGpd54oqA&nohtml5=False)

**Get on a SFAS Forum** – *There are many online places to get great SFAS advice. Here’s the one I used the most -* [*http://www.professionalsoldiers.com/forums/showthread.php?t=30549*](http://www.professionalsoldiers.com/forums/showthread.php?t=30549)

***PHYSICALLY PREPARE BEFORE YOU GO***

**Get Your Pace-Count** *– I bought a “Contractor’s Wheel” at my local hardware store and measured out several 100m courses over various terrains to get my pace-count. I also used it to see how much time it would take me to cover 100m, which helped me later in my route planning. Having this knowledge locked in before getting to SFAS helped me focus and be confident about approaching the LandNav portion of the course.*

**My 3-Month Physical-Training Plan** – *I am not a physical fitness expert, but here’s what I did that worked for me:*

***Note: I rucked with heavy ruck. This is not for everyone and, though this worked very well for me, I was experiencing some minor overuse injuries by the end of the three months, so train with caution!***

Day 1:

    -    5+ mile cardio (slow) run

    -    3 sets of max pushups, going from regular, to narrow, to wide arm and then repeating

    -    2 sets of max sit-ups in a minute

    -    2 sets planks for 1:30 minutes

    -    Ruck off road on flat and up and down hills with 75lbs for 7+ miles

    -    3 sets of squats w 75lb ruck

Day 2:

    -    3 sets of max pull-ups, chin-ups, narrow pull-ups, and wide pull-ups

    -    2 sets of max sit-ups in a minute

    -    2 sets planks for 1:30 minutes

    -    Fartlek for 2+ miles

Day 3:

    -    5+ mile cardio (slow) run

    -    Go to the gym

         -    Narrow Bench

         -    Regular Bench

         -    Bench Triceps

         -    Bench Butterflies

         -    Machine Butterflies

         -    Dips

         -    Fire Hydrants

         -    Shrugs

         -    Neck Bridges

         -    Planks

         -    Sit-ups

   -    2 sets of max sit-ups in a minute

   -    2 sets of planks for 1:30 minutes

   -    Ruck off road on flat and up and down hills with 75lbs for 7+ miles

   -    3 sets of squats w 75lb ruck

Day 4:

    -    3 sets of max pull-ups, chin-ups, narrow pull-ups, and wide pull-ups

    -    2 sets of max sit-ups in a minute

    -    2 sets planks for 1:30 minutes

    -    Fartlek for 2+ miles

Day 5:

    -   Rest

***WHAT TO DO WHEN THERE***

**Commit Not to Quit** – *I was 100% committed to completing SFAS and getting selected before I got there. However, as soon as I arrived, I started feeling overwhelmed with questions: is this for me, will I just embarrass myself, do I even want to go to the Q Course. Those voices were suddenly louder than the ones telling me that this is what I wanted. However, I was experienced enough to know that these were just nerves talking. If you get there and you feel the same way, then that just means you’re a normal human being at SFAS. Further, if you actually decide you don’t want to be in SF anymore, then make that decision AFTER Selection when you can think clearly. There is no way anyone is capable of making a fully-rational life decision at SFAS. It’s a school designed to test you with stress. You’re under pressure, you’re sleep deprived, you’re in a new environment, etc. Even if you “know” SF is not for you, you deserve to at least finish SFAS and then make a clear, conscious decision when you get home. Then you can at least be proud that you are one of the few who gave it their best shot at Selection and maybe even got selected. If you make an impulsive, emotions-based decision to quit, you will only regret it as there is zero benefit to quitting.*

*Be mindful too of “Imposter Syndrome”, which plagues a lot of high achievers and SFAS candidates. Imposter Syndrome is where you downplay your own accomplishments and feel at any second you’ll be exposed as a fraud who shouldn’t be at SFAS (or the Q Course, an SF Team, etc.). Never doubt that you deserve to be at Selection! Imposter Syndrome can even persist after being Selected. So if you feel "If I can do it, anyone can" or you “know” that "They must let everyone in", then that’s Imposter Syndrome and it’s a weight that will undermine you.*

**Don’t Self-Select / Don’t be Your Own Cadre** – *Similar to the above on never quitting, it’s critical to never self-select. In other words, never decide in your own mind that you’re not going to be selected. That is not your job. In fact, there’s a whole team of paid experts (the cadre) who handle the selection part for you. Your only job is to do the best you can every day. Of course, this is easier said than done. Like most people, I obsessed over whether I would be selected and, like most people, I looked for every telltale sign of it. On two occasions, I interpreted what the cadre were saying / doing as evidence that I wasn’t going to be selected. One time, I was placed in a group of other candidates that seemed to be “the weak ones.” “Damn,” I thought, “I am in the weak group…guess I’m not going to be selected.” I later learned that the group had nothing to do with whether I would be selected. Another time, a cadre member called me over to talk with him. Again, feeling that I must be in trouble, I found myself getting dangerously short with him. But again, it turned out to have nothing to do with anything; he just wanted me to pass the word on something to the team.*

*Looking for evidence of whether you will be selected is dangerous and counter-productive. For me, believing I wasn’t going to be selected destroyed my attitude for about ten valuable minutes during team week and I found myself becoming grouchy with my teammates…not a good situation. Don’t do it!*

**Be Social** – *Take every opportunity to meet and get to know someone new.  Get your first name out there so people remember you; a good nickname is even better.  You don’t want to be the gray man to/for your peers.  If you are, they won’t know you come Team Week.*

**Treat your Weapon like It’s Real** – *Losing your fake M16/rubber duck is often an instant drop from the course. To prevent this, I saw some guys write the word “WEAPON” on the backs of their hands as a reminder to always have it in their hands. Likewise, throwing a rubber duck to the ground, treating it like it’s a hammer or doing anything that you would not do if it was real will get you negative attention.*

*To help me maintain control of my weapon, I did a couple things. First, I NEVER leaned it up against anything but my leg. Lots of candidates would lean their weapons up against trees to check their maps and then walk off without them. Most recovered weapons were found like that. Also, as the weapon would often slip off my leg when leaned there, I created a little barrel sling by typing a loop of cord to my belt. Whenever I did a map check, I put the butt stock on the ground and the barrel through the loop. That way, it wouldn’t slip off my leg and I wouldn’t forget it.*

**Practice Self-Healing Techniques** – *I used meditation and breathing techniques at SFAS to increase performance and found that even just basic techniques worked amazingly well. Once when I was lost during LandNav and had just spent a frantic twenty minutes trying to find myself on the map, I decided to sit down and meditate. It felt contradictory to what I needed to be doing: “I am running out of time; is now the best time to sit down and relax?” However, almost as soon as I sat down and started calming myself with some deep breaths, a wave of relaxation came over me and I started to think clearly once again. When I looked at my map again two minutes later, I recognized where I was almost immediately.*

*Another technique I used was whenever I was nervous about speaking in front of a group candidates, I would look away from everyone and smile the biggest smile I could and hold it for seventeen seconds. Smiling, even when it’s forced, releases a flood of endorphins which boosts your happiness and self-confidence. This is a trick I used before standing on top of a stump to address the entire class and I was able to speak to them without any problems.*

**Go in Believing You Were Already Selected** *– This was a trick told to me by another successful candidate before I left. It was also something that I subsequently read about before I left (Tony Robins has some talks on this). The mind can’t tell the difference between fantasy and reality if it believes it. Telling yourself before going to Selection “I’m glad Selection went so sell and I got Selected” may seem to be bizarre but say it enough times and the mind begins to accept it as reality. You’ll be much more confident and relaxed doing something you know you’ve already succeeded at.*

*I am not a spiritual or religious person. This is just science and these techniques have been used to thousands of years. If you want to add your own religious or spiritual elements such as a god has chosen you for this, that would probably work too.*

**Be Proactive about Chaffing** **From your Ruck** – *There are several things you can try that will help or even eliminate chaffing on your back from your ruck:*

*1. Put 100 mph tape on the areas where you know there will be friction*

*2. Use suspenders, not a belt.  Suspenders can be better as often it’s the hard edge of the belt that rubs the skin raw.  Suspenders also allow you to keep the waist of your pants high to cover more skin and loose as I found that a tight waist broke the skin down. For me, I sewed two small loops into the waist of my pants, attached small carabiners to the Army’s wet-weather pants, and hooked them to the loops.*

*3.  If you want to wear a belt, you can cut your belt down to about two feet and loop it through the front belt loops.  I saw several guys do this and it will keep you pants tight while eliminating the need for the belt to go across the back.*

**Role your Ponchos into your Sleep Mat** – *This saves a lot of space in your ruck.*

**Bring PT Shorts for the Field** *– Great for sleeping in.*

**Woobie -** *I found my woobie was more than enough to stay warm in the March night and never used my sleep system.*

**Highlight Your Weapon** *– It’s up to you, but lots of Candidates put reflective and glow-in-the-dark tape on their weapons, presumably to help them find them during the day and night in case they got lost.*

**Monitor your Personality** – *SFAS isn’t always the best place to show off the uniqueness of your personality.  It’s kinda like you want to stand out for your ability to fit in…so work to fit in.*

**LandNav Tips**
     *1.* ***PUT YOUR SCORE SHEET IN A ZIPLOC BAG AND PUT IT IN A SECURE POCKET.****I saw many, many unnecessary LandNav drops of Soldiers that put their score sheets in their map cases: their score sheet fell out, got hopelessly damaged, or was lost when their entire map case was lost. You can be four-for-four on points but without a score sheet, it’s a zero.  AVOID THIS TRAGEDY BY PUTTING THE SCORE SHEET IN AN MRE ZIPLOC BAG AND PUTTING IT IN A SECURE POCKET THAT YOU KEEP NOTHING ELSE IN.  For me, the best pocket was the chest pocket:  it was secure, covered by the FLC, and high up so to stay above the water.*

*2.  Tie a small loop of gutted 550 cord to your best compass and hang it off the sternum strap of your FLC.  It makes getting a quick and accurate compass reading fast and efficient.*

*3.  Modify your protractor*

*a.  Carefully shave away the excess plastic from around the 1:50,000 triangle*

*b.  Run a loop of 550 cord gut through the hole in the middle to get a quick and accurate azimuth*

*c.  Take a permanent marker and create a 5-kilometer ruler across the top of the protractor.  I marked out each kilometer with a long tick mark, and then every 200m’s in between.  I found it very accurate.*

*4.  Carefully write the grid-to-magnetic / magnetic-to-grid conversion numbers of the declination diagram on your map so that they are always visible, even when the map if folded.*

*5.  When you get your compass, thoroughly check it and be proactive about DX’ing it if you need to.  You may not be able to DX it for several days, but they will give you a chance to.*

*6.  Mark your map up any way you need to.  I highlighted stuff, wrote notes in the margins, and even put an inspirational quote on it.*

*7.  Cut a square of the hard MRE case cardboard to make a map table and keep it in your pocket.*

 *8. ALWAYS re-shoot your azimuth if you stumble across a “Happy Stake”. Happy Stakes have the exact grid coordinate on them and, even if you are “absolutely sure” you know where you are, it’s always better to go to the stake to check and re-shoot your azimuth. Too many times I was overconfident and walked right by a Happy Stake, thinking I knew where I was and I was wrong.*