

My Summer in a Nutshell (Continued)

Then the long awaited day came, it was amusing to be on the other side of Swab Summer and following the footsteps of my cadre. I was surprised at how nervous my class was and how as a swab on June 27, 2011, I did not realize that my cadre were probably just as nervous as I was. My stomach had butterflies especially since my company, Alfa Company, was the first to receive our swabs. I was waiting in the quad while my classmates were all hiding in the windows watching and anticipating the official start of Swab Summer. As the bus rolled up and stopped in front of Chase Hall, I felt the same nervousness I did when I was sitting on the bus two years ago. I heard my classmates rushing the Alfa swabs off the bus and it was adrenaline rushing to see the people that will be under our care and guidance for the next three weeks. Swab Summer was a remarkable experience where I was able to work with my classmates and lead the incoming class. It was a lot of work and a lot of hours spent with the swabs, but so worthwhile. I grew so much closer with my classmates and we understood how to work together to make Swab Summer the most beneficial to the Alfa swabs as well as for our own leadership development. After the three weeks, it was so hard to hand our swabs off to a whole new set of cadre. I really enjoyed the hands-on experience and also felt very fortunate for the cadre section I was in and the people I got to work with.

After Swab Summer, I had Coastal Sail Training Program (CSTP) which is a two-week program when we learned about sailing on Leadership 44s. It was like a rich man's vacation; we went to Block Island, Martha's Vineyard, Woods Hole, Newport, and Stonington. Not only did I learn more about sailing, but the program in some ways taught me more about leadership and myself than being cadre did. Sailing with five of my classmates and a safety officer allowed us to have an open environment of critiquing and giving feedback on how well an individual prepared and led a leg of our voyage. I learned and saw first-hand where there was room for improvement in being a leader and this opportunity also allowed me to recognize different leadership styles. I definitely got more out of the CSTP than I had anticipated and it was very rewarding to see our boat form into a team by the end of the trip.

Sadly, CSTP was the end of my summer. I was unable to partake in either the Cadet Aviation Training Program (CATP) or the Marine Safety Training Program (MSTP), which involves going to an air station or learning about marine safety respectively. After sailing, I was able to quickly unpack, do laundry, and then repack for the United States Air Force Academy. It was the beginning of August and I reported to the academy in Colorado along with four other Coasties. The academic semester at USAFA was starting two weeks earlier than CGA. It was bittersweet to leave CGA especially after the summer I had and how close I got with my class, but I was excited to see a new service academy and meet new people.

Finally, I have been able to catch up on how my life is currently. It is the start of September and I have gotten used to the lifestyle at USAFA. Everything here is definitely different; the only familiarity was the furniture! We have the same exact type of furniture at CGA so unpacking was easy. Other than that, all the rules are different and the academy is so huge and foreign. It took a while to get use to all the short-hand terminologies that the cadets use. Luckily, I have an awesome roommate that has been very helpful. I really enjoy being in Colorado! The trails and outdoor activities are endless and I enjoy exploring. Colorado as a state has the edge over Connecticut. The cadet lifestyle is also much more relaxed; cadets can take naps during the day, wear civilian clothes after the workday, borrow each other's cars and go out during the week. It is amazing all the things upperclass cadets are allowed to do here. I do believe their freshman year here is much harder, but then the rest of their experience here at USAFA is more hands-off compared to CGA. Someone said once that USAFA is like a hard pinch on your arm, but then the pain goes away as for CGA is a tight long squeeze that lasts four years. Although, the

everyday routine here at USAFA is more relaxed, I do miss the family back at CGA. There was a comfort in knowing everyone and being able to greet everyone you passed by and receiving the same hospitality. It is something that USAFA cannot accomplish because of the amount of cadets (approximately 4,000 cadets compared to our almost 1,000).

This past weekend was the first football game and it was exciting to see cadets parachuting out of planes and landing on the football field. I cannot wait to start my jump classes later in the semester! For any prospective cadets, I am biased toward the Coast Guard, but I am enjoying my semester vacation at USAFA! I feel very fortunate to get the best of both worlds where I am part of CGA, but was able to skip USAFAs freshman year and enjoy their many benefits for a semester on exchange.