

2/c Summer – Best Summer at the Academy Yet (Continued)

The next week on my schedule was the Cadet Aviation Training Program (CATP). This week involved going to the Coast Guard Air Training Center in Mobile, Alabama, where I had the privilege of learning about aviation careers in the Coast Guard, and even got the opportunity to fly an MH-65 Dolphin (Coast Guard helicopter). As an aspiring aviator, I enjoyed the opportunities the week provided, and it was also neat to visit a place in the country that I had never been before.

After returning to New London from Mobile, I had probably my most stressful week of the summer, Rules of the Road (ROTR) week. ROTR is a course that all 2/c must take that can best be described as a driver's education course, but for boats underway on the high seas. After a week of class covering the material in our ROTR books we all had to take a 50-question exam, with a pass being a 90%. Extra pressure was put on by the fact that you must pass the test on either your first or second try, otherwise be put on academic probation (not good). My classmates and I were very successful, as we had one of the highest pass rates – and I am happy to say that I was one of the majority, passing with a 96%.

The next week I was able to directly apply what I learned in ROTR while underway on the T-boats. The Academy maintains a fleet of three tug-resembling boats that are fondly called T-boats (short for training boat). During the week my classmates and I got practice driving, anchoring, and completing m-overboard drills and got to explore the engineering systems onboard, which resembled a small Coast Guard cutter. Besides providing a practical application to the theories that we had learned in our ROTR course, the week also provided an opportunity to practice peer-leadership during our rotation as Conning Officers aboard the boat (think momentarily captain of the vessel).

After T-boats, I had the privilege to sail a million dollar yacht around New England for two weeks as part of the Academy's Coastal Sail Training Program (CSTP). The ports of call included Block Island, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, several ports on Cape Cod, and Newport. As relaxing as the program sounds it wasn't all fun and games – we had to sail daily, coming up with a plan to sail anywhere from 20 to 50 nautical miles on the open ocean, taking into account weather, sea states, traffic patterns, and crew condition. The program was definitively rewarding in practicing proper seamanship, leadership, and learning more about our chosen profession as Coast Guardsmen. Factor in the unique ports-of-call and feeling like a millionaire the weeks have well earned their reputation as the some of the best times at the Academy.

If my account of the last seven weeks of trainings doesn't sell you on the fact that 2/c summer is a blast, then maybe these facts will. You get to spend every day at the Academy during the summer strengthening friendships with great people that you will not only spend the rest of college with, but will most likely interact with even more during your professional career. Not to mention, while not training during the weekends, you are free to go anywhere you please, as long as you are back by 7 p.m. on Sunday. This summer I have been to more beaches in New England than I can count, seen the Blue Angels fly at an air show, spent a weekend in Providence, Rhode Island, and even got to go to the Belmont Stakes (New York's Kentucky Derby). I can say without a doubt that this summer has been

crucial to my development as a future officer in the United States Coast Guard, and also given me a chance to unwind after a challenging school year.

So what's next? Currently I am on my three weeks of leave from the Academy, at home spending well-deserved time with family and friends. When I return, I will have a week of prep, where I prepare to assume the role of a cadre, then two weeks introducing swabs to underway life aboard the Barque *Eagle* (the Coast Guard's training cutter) before returning to the Academy for a week as active cadre within the barracks. After the summer I will be heading to Annapolis for the fall, as an exchange cadet at the Naval Academy. I cannot wait to relay where my next adventures take me. Until next post: Fair Winds and Following Seas.