

The Black Dragon Bulletin



Fall 2022



A Word From Our Commanding Officer

By Captain de Marcellus

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

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Greetings and welcome back Battalion,

I want to congratulate you all on another very successful semester. It was a semester of many firsts-most notably it was a first in exercising the battalion's leadership from Princeton with both the Battalion Commander and Operations officer positions residing at Princeton. Despite the obvious challenges, our level of activity and coordination only continued to increase and improve. My hat's off to the whole team in pulling off such a success.

Having just come pack from the Professors of Naval Science conference in Chicago and talking to the other unit COs, I am only more proud of our unit Midshipmen, MECEPS, OC, and cadre! The Fleet is our customer, and I feel as though the product that we provide to it is superb! It is clear that the unit's emphasis on use of the chain of command and squad leaders' knowing and supporting their squad members has paid great dividends. This is a mindset that will be indispensable for the entirety of your Navy career and continue to serve you outside the military in your family and future civilian endeavors. I think that this focus on "taking care of those in our charge" will only improve with the great work that the unit has put in to the Battalion's new mentorship program.

Continue always to be reflecting on where you still need to improve your academic, physical, mental, and moral state and establish a plan to apply effort commensurate with the level of need. As always, the unit staff is ready to help.

Looking forward to seeing the unit in action this Spring!

This summer, I had the privilege of being a Midshipman Instructor (MI) during the second cycle of New Student Orientation. It spanned for three weeks at RTC Great Lakes, Illinois, and was one of the sharpest and most memorable experiences I've had as a Midshipman.

An MI's job is to guide, train, and supervise Midshipman Candidates, both Navy and Marine options, from high schools around the nation as they are indoctrinated into Navy ROTC. Additionally, we work closely with and for Drill Instructors (DI) and Recruit Division Commanders (RDC) who instruct and mentor us throughout our time until the month concludes. In the end, Candidates graduate and earn the title of Midshipman, ready (for the most part) to be sent away to their respective units and universities.

During my time, there was little sleep, impressively fast eating, and long days where we would be on the move, monitoring Candidates at various locations on base as they learned and trained. Obviously, inexperienced college students in this huge enclosure of identical bald teenagers will get confused, snap at one another, or make various mistakes. However, NSI allows these MIs to come together and learn teamwork, stress management in fast-paced environments, and develop hands-on leadership skills. Functioning under the high stress to form a cohesive team was necessary to stay afloat.

My greatest focus throughout the month was the Candidates and their well-being. Nothing felt better to me, personally, than Week 2's gradual relaxation, and brief moments of more casual mentorship when the DIs and RDCs allowed it. I snuck in moments of conversation with the girls in my platoon, Alpha-2, answering questions about the rigors of college life, finding direction/hobbies, and staying confident when facing challenges in NROTC. These moments where I could be more approachable and realistic for them were incredibly valuable to me, and I would not have traded them for the world.

In conclusion, my time there was unforgettable. Any Midshipmen interested in this summer training should contact the handful of former MI's we have in our battalion with questions, concerns, and preparation advice!



"GO" Where No Midshipman Has Gone Before

By MIDN 3/C Basile

How often is it that we are afforded the opportunity to spend more than two months exploring another country, learning about its culture, and studying a foreign language—all expenses paid? This past summer, I was fortunate enough to take part in Project Global Officer Morocco, during which I spent 9 weeks learning Arabic in Arab American Language Institute (AALIM) Learning Institute in a small city called Meknés. I was one of a group of fifteen other ROTC students from different branches and units all over the country who embarked on this cultural excursion, and throughout our short time together, I can truly say I have made some lifelong friends.

The program we all chose was a beginner course offered through University of Maryland. No prior Arabic experience was necessary, and we were all awarded 12 credits upon successful completion of the program. A key component of this experience was staying with a host family. We were all paired with a roommate and were able to practice conversing with our host brothers and sisters, many of whom spoke little to no English. In addition, we were able to taste authentic Moroccan cooking, prepared by each of our gracious host mothers, and could even learn how to make some traditional dishes if we were lucky!

Though our weeks were fairly structured, the program allotted sufficient free time to travel to adjacent cities, go sightseeing, and barter with local street vendors. On a typical week, we had classes Monday through Friday from 0900 to 1300, with either a quiz or exam taking place every Friday. After our Friday exam, we almost always hopped on a train to go on an adventure. Our weekend adventures ranged from spending a night riding camels through the Sahara desert, hiking along the scenic waterfalls in Morocco's "Blue City," or soaking up the eclectic nightlife in Marrakech. Not only did I have a fantastic time in Morocco, but I feel my trip was an invaluable exercise in learning to adapt in unfamiliar situations, compromising with people whose lives are very different from my own, and finding alternative ways to communicate. I proved to myself that I was able to see eye-to-eye with Berber men who had lived in the desert their entire lives. I was able to find my way back home after taking a public train in a foreign country two hours in the wrong direction. I was able to explain to a street vendor that I would pay no more than 24 dirham for 1 kg of plums, even with the very limited Arabic knowledge I had upon arrival. These types of experiences make great travel stories, but are also integral in building the confidence one needs to lead.



Tunnel to Towers

By MIDN 3/C Coppola
& MIDN 3/C Barker

The Tunnel to Towers was a fantastic experience shared with thousands of others. The Tunnel to Towers is a 5k running event and fundraiser in support of the Tunnel to Towers Foundation, which was established in memory Stephen Siller and those who died during 9/11. The foundation supports first responders and catastrophically injured service members. Stephen Siller was an NYC firefighter who had to run through the Brooklyn Portal of Hugh L. Carey Tunnel with pounds of gear to get to the Twin Towers quickly. In honor of him and others, we started the run at the tunnel and ended the run at the Twin Towers Memorial.

The run was a memorable experience with others in the battalion. Running to cadence after cadence in the tunnel was exhilarating. Not only did we run the same route as Stephen Siller, but the members of the battalion also collectively performed over 2000 thousand pull ups for the amount of steps inside the Twin Tower. SSgt Sandoval challenged us to do this, to give us extra insight on the sacrifices that were made that day.

Our favorite thing was seeing the JROTC cadets, different service members, and the other participants there to honor and remember a time when America was down in every aspect but still stood united together. There were children as young as 5 to elders that banded together for this run. Although some of us weren't even alive during the tragic events of 9/11, we still felt the melancholic emotions with every step we ran. This feeling was amplified when we ended at the Twin Towers Memorial. Our battalion sat down and Gunnery Sergeant Debord started talking about 9/11 and how that day affected his life. Then the rest of the staff followed, sharing their unique outlooks of experience with us. Overall, the experience was eye opening and gave us a chance to remember and be proud in the footsteps we are following.



Introduction to OC Torres

By MIDN 3/C Mascarinas

OC Torres joined our unit this semester through the Seaman to Admiral Program (STA-21). She is a Jersey-Born Puerto Rican who is majoring in Communications with a public relations focus and has travelled the world throughout her career in the Navy. She's been to Virginia, San Diego, Japan, South Carolina, and before she arrived at the unit she was down in Bahrain. The Navy was her goal ever since she was in the 5th grade, never a plan B, always plan A. This was because of her role model uncle who was in the Navy as an AV. One day, he sent her a postcard and she thought it was the coolest thing she owned as a kid, showing it off during show and tell, the works, but it was tragically lost. During her days at high school she took part in JROTC and loved it, and as college rolled around she realized it just wasn't the time for it yet, and decided to enlist. Her dream job was to work on Helo engines, but it just wasn't available. So, she asked for the next hardest, dirtiest, mechanic job available and that would be Aviation Support Equipment Technician (AS) and figured it would also be a great conversation piece with her father as he was a mechanic his entire life. OC Torres excelled as an AS as well as being the only female on her flight deck.

Throughout her career, she's realized how hard it was being someone in her position, as the military is a predominantly male environment. Being a female in a mechanic role only adds to that difficulty. In her experience, opportunity wasn't afforded equally to her and she'd always have to constantly deal with people who would question her expertise. The hardest thing she had to do in her career was fighting for herself to prove to the guys that she and any other woman can be just as good if not better. However, the decision to enlist in the Navy was surprising to her mother. Seeing that OC Torres as youth was signed on to a modeling agency in New York, acting, had connections studio connections, her entire life previously was about performing arts and entertainment. which led her to thinking her daughter would be the next Miss USA! But in the end, both family and friends in the fleet who are her family away from family have been supportive of her. She especially needs it with the tremendous amount of effort that STA-21 Officer Candidates have to go through just to apply. OC Torres hopes to be in a more impactful role when she steps in as an officer role.



On November 5th 2022, Princeton's Center for International Security Studies hosted an event simulating 16 days of crisis in East Africa. Teams were divided into political and military representatives and would need to negotiate with other countries' representatives in order to ensure that the needs of your nation, both political and military, are met.

To put it briefly, I represented the people of Tigray, an ethnic group in northern Ethiopia that was attempting to gain autonomy. MIDN Mascarinas represented Eritrea, a nation very opposed to this idea, whilst MIDN Imperial tried to keep conflict off of his border in Sudan. This doesn't account for the massive roles that the Ethiopian government, along with the Chinese and United States forces, had on this sim. A major thing this sim taught all of us was the importance of communication and commanders' intent. Just like reality, the military side must answer to the political side to get anything approved, and the communication between two prongs of a team must be squared away to ensure success. Commanders' intent is at play since the goals outlined by the team are non negotiable and must be understood and met by both parts of the country.

Our very own CDR Eaton made a star appearance for opening and closing remarks, providing the participants with the lay of the land and the history of the region. He also delved into how important events like this are in broadening the mindsets of the participants. I would have to agree with CDR Eaton, this event was an eye opener into all of the considerations that come into play in times where people like us are needed most.



Commander Colleen "Mini" Minihan's visit

By MIDN 4/C Dominguez

On November 4, 2022, midshipmen from the NROTC Rutgers-Princeton Unit arrived at Friday lab and were introduced to Commander Colleen "Mini" Minihan. Commander Minihan is the commanding officer of the Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron HSC-28 "Dragon Whales," which provides combat-ready MH-60S helicopters for various missions in the U.S. fleet. Commander Minihan gave a short presentation about the capabilities of the helicopters and was later open to answer any and all questions asked by both midshipmen and the unit's active-duty staff. The questions addressed leadership, experiences, and overall life as a woman, a pilot, and an officer in the U.S. Navy.

After CDR Minihan finished answering questions, Friday's lab was over. However, the best has yet to come. The unit went over to the Busch campus and waited for the arrival of two MH-60S helicopters flown by Commander Minihan's junior officers. Since the helicopters' fuel was low and there was low visibility, several issues arose; this is where the incredible leadership of Commander Minihan was displayed as she let her newest aircraft commander on his very first mission make quick and difficult decisions and handle the increasing level of stress on his own. Finally, at 1205, the two helicopters arrived on campus, knocked the covers off of several midshipmen, and turned off their engines.

The two aircraft, the junior officers, and enlisted personnel immediately interacted with the unit. Everyone was allowed to enter the cockpit and ask questions to the personnel. For many of the 4/C's and 3/C's in the unit, this was a great opportunity to learn about the aviation community and have a great bonding experience with each other as they took several pictures and polaroids with the personnel, aircraft, and each other until the end. After a quick hour of interacting, the two aircraft left at 1340 with Commander Minihan onboard. They flew up, flew over, and flew away as a few midshipmen, the CO of the NROTC unit, and civilians watched and heard the incredible power the two MH



Turkey Bowl Experience

By MIDN 4/C O'Neill

Once a year, a competition for bragging rights and an ornate trophy takes place within the Rutgers ROTC community right before Thanksgiving break. Midshipmen from the Rutgers/Princeton NROTC unit, Cadets from their respective Rutgers ROTC and Rutgers AFROTC units, and members from the Rutgers Veterans' House compete in a knockout-style championship football tournament called "The Turkey Bowl." To say that the tournament is taken seriously would be an understatement. Each respective team prepares fiercely, taking their own time to practice and develop offensive and defensive plays that each team hopes will inevitably win them the championship.

Coming into this tournament as a 4/C, or a freshman, was already an imposing matter due to the importance of this game, let alone the fact that I was the quarterback. For those who are not football-savvy, the quarterback is the person who controls the offense, since they are the one that throws the ball or hands off the ball for a run play. Nonetheless, I was excited and ready for when the day of the Turkey Bowl came. My fellow Midshipmen and I had spent the few weeks leading up to the tournament practicing, and we were prepared for a run at the trophy. Our first game, against Veterans' House, ended in a shutout win, due to our "lockdown" defense and multiple passing touchdowns caught by MIDN Boisvert and MIDN Hill. After the semi-final was the championship match against the Army ROTC unit, who had been on a 5 year winning streak coming into this game. It was a tough, hard-fought game that ended up in a loss for the NROTC unit, due to a hard-blitzing and man coverage defense that did not allow for many long-distance plays that were crucial to a victory, as only one first-down was allowed across the whole field. In the end, the Midshipmen from the NROTC unit came in 2nd. It was an extremely fun experience that I look forward to competing in again next year, and I hope we, the Midshipmen, can capture victory and cheer as we hold the Turkey Bowl Trophy above our heads.



Military Appreciation Game

By MIDN 4/C Miller

Through the muck of the semester, from the early morning PT sessions to the late hours in the library studying for exams, it is events like the Military Appreciation Game that give everyone in the battalion something to look forward to. Whether it be getting to wear your SDB's, standing on the field as players warm up, or simply getting to watch a great football game, the Military Appreciation Game offered plenty of excitement. The activities started with the pre-game parade. Midshipmen who took part walked through the Rutgers Boardwalk and showed off the battalion. Inside the stadium, many members of the battalion had the privilege of hanging out on the field as the players warmed up. Following this, alongside the Rutgers ROTC and AFROTC, midshipmen were able to stand outside the tunnel and welcome the Scarlet Knights as they ran out onto the field, while MIDN Barker and Foran participated as a part of the color guard.

The atmosphere was electric and it was a spectacle to hear the crowd roar and to see the flashing lights. Even though the odds were most certainly stacked against Rutgers as they played the fourth ranked team in the country, there was plenty of excitement to go around. Throughout the action packed game, the battalion also participated in events like a T-Shirt toss and race. MIDN Farin and Hwang were even featured on the jumbotron in a special presentation of a dedicated empty POW/MIA chair at SHI stadium. As Rutgers stunned many by keeping the score tight throughout the first half, there was a lot to feel good about. Throughout the stadium there was an overwhelming amount of unity. There was a sense of pride that rang around as the student section chanted "USA" and fireworks shot up. Throughout it all, the Military Appreciation Game brought about a sense of camaraderie, both within the unit and with the members of the Rutgers ROTC and AFROTC units. The game acted as both an event to bring us all together and as a remembrance of the honor that we all have as midshipmen.



DJing at MilBall

By MIDN 3/C Mascarinas

I'm no Pauly D or Avicii, but I know my way around a table because back in the day my dad did it for a side hustle. Being his equipment mover throughout the years led me to become curious on how the hardware I carried worked. I did this as a little hobby for friends just to get a kick out of it, but milball was different. MIDN Kowalewski asked everyone if they knew a guy to help chisel down the cost of celebrating the birthdays of both the Navy and Marines- funnily enough I was that guy. I realized this was my chance of giving thanks to the battalion for being so welcoming as I had just joined it during the Spring semester of last year. After plenty of requests filed in, a plethora of complicated wiring, and many equipment verifications later, the night had finally come. Cocktail hour began with some Sinatra, Bobby Darin, and Dean Martin. To the pleasure of Captain de Marcellus, it started to feel like a Martin Scorsese movie while everyone chatted and got comfortable. This night of course serves a purpose, that being self-reflection and honoring those who come before us. I figured I would do this for free but unexpectedly came out 1000 dollars heavier by being awarded by newly founded Buchanan Foundation and their new scholarship, which honors the recently fallen 1stLt Maxwell Buchanan, an alumnus of the NROTC program. Captain Wright gave a heart-felt speech looking back on 1stLt Buchanan's vast accomplishments in his career, and that being paired with CWO Romanitch's invigorating speech only made the milball even more worth celebrating. As the final toast and benediction came to a close, the festivities had only just started. "DJ you better get this party started!" was shouted ecstatically by Gunnery Sergeant Debord. Special shoutout to my mentor MIDN Spera for supporting me by being the first on the dance floor! A conga line with Gunnery Sergeant caught on quickly along with plenty of line dances, followed by plenty of midshipmen in filed in a circle waiting for someone brave enough to step in the middle and of course I had to take initiative- whether it was getting sturdy or waltz dancing with my Service Jacket, it was all a hoot. There were a few bumps in the road from unexpected occurrences, but for free-fifty, I think I did a pretty bang-up job, and if any MIDN says otherwise, I'll be waiting for your complaint at Mess Night! In all seriousness, I'd like to thank MIDN Kowalewski, MIDN Kim, and Master Sergeant Debord for taking a chance on me and allowing me to have this opportunity!



One of our lesser known and important billets within the battalion is the one I currently hold. As the Fundraising Officer, it is our responsibility to coordinate events with Athletics, Food venues, and other opportunities that bring in revenue for our Scarlet Anchor Society. Scarlet Anchor Society is where we as a battalion are able to pay for our expensive venues such as our Military Ball, Military Excellence Competitions (MECs) and Unit trips to Leadership Conferences. For this semester, we worked alongside many sports teams here on campus. Beginning in mid-August, MIDN aided and worked very closely with the Women's Field Hockey team serving as ball rollers and retrievers. Our Battalion also worked alongside the Men's Football team in raising and lowering the field goal nets whenever a field goal was kicked. All the funds recovered from both Field Hockey and Football have all been deposited into the Scarlet Anchor Society. These two big events could not have been possible without the help of our MIDN who volunteered their time for the greater good of the Unit. This semester, we also had the privilege of working with Chick Fil-a and Chipotle. Both of these food venues hosted fundraisers for the Scarlet Anchor Society and in exchange 15%-20% of the profit went directly to Scarlet Anchor Society. MIDN were able to share the flyers with classmates, friends and family promoting the event so that we were able to maximize our profit for the Scarlet Anchor Society. Without Fundraising, the Battalion would be hard pressed to recover funds in a way that allows MIDN to grow in a leadership position. Scarlet Anchor Society is our life line and Fundraising is responsible for keeping a steady income to allow for MIDN to attend events without worrying about cost and paying out of pocket.



Want to find out how to support our Battalion?

Please visit the Scarlet Anchor Society page at
nrotc.rutgers.edu/donations !

The Black Dragon Bulletin



Fall 2022

Remarks From Our Midshipman BCO

By 1/C Hilton



As the Fall 2023 semester draws to a close I want to thank all of the midshipmen, staff, and families that make up the Black Dragon Battalion for your effort and support in making our unit one of the finest Navy Reserve Officer Training Programs in the Country. As you have read in this Newsletter, the midshipmen of the Black Dragon Battalion are engaged in a wide array of incredible training activities both around the world and right here at home in New Jersey. From watching helicopters land on the grass fields across from Werblin Gym, to lining the tunnel at the military appreciation game, this semester has been packed with incredible memories that will last a life time.

Being a part of the student leadership team has meant I have had the privilege of witnessing the dedication to this unit displayed by so many of my fellow midshipmen. As we head into the Spring semester I know our unit will continue to grow in accomplishing its mission of forging the next generation of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Officers. I hope you have wonderful holiday season and a happy new year!

Closing Remarks

By 3/C Mascarinas



Thank you to all those who wrote the articles, like many of our naval events, it could not have been done without teamwork. I'd like to personally thank LT Garrett and ENS Gregor for their efforts in editing this newsletter, MIDN Paccione for keeping tabs on the progress of it, and MIDN Iacobucci for helping me learn the ropes. The next newsletter billet holder will be MIDN 4/C Suringa, and I'll be sure to follow Iacobucci's example! But before we close the book on this, I'd like to mention two important people that have impacted this unit as a whole.

Ms. Ruff has been the secretary assistant since the inception of Black Dragon Battalion. She's helped in coordinating all meetings, events, emails, and always brought a cheerful atmosphere the moment you'd ring that doorbell and hear her soft spoken "Come in!" on the speaker. She will be departing the unit as of the start of winter break and will be beginning her career as the Secretary of the Dean for Rutgers Newark! Maybe this means you are eligible to be our guest of honor? I digress, thank you for the dedication you've given to the unit and good luck in all your future endeavors!



On a much more somber note, the battalion has lost one of their own, First Lieutenant Maxwell Buchanan- a firefighter, lifeguard, instructor, Marine Corps Officer, brother, and son. Hearing his stories from those who personally knew him like pushing his limits until heatstroke, to helping those with disabilities learn tennis only goes to show how much of a leader he was to the Battalion, community, and Marine Corps. He was a beacon of leadership that was dimmed far too soon.

In remembrance and honor of their son, the Buchanans have formed the non-profit Max Buchanan Foundation. Personally, I have been humbled and honored to be the first recipient of the Buchanan Scholarship. First Lieutenant Buchanan was once a college programmer such as myself, so he and his family knew the struggle that entails. Everyone sees potential in me in ways I don't see in myself, and this scholarship is evident of that. It is a physical message to keep pushing towards the light at the end of the tunnel and will continue to do so for the many winners beyond myself. This scholarship is a way for the Buchanan family to continue their impact on the NROTC program, just as we will continue to remember First Lieutenant Buchanan.



First Lieutenant Buchanan will be dearly missed, fair winds and following seas.

Please consider donating to the Max Buchanan Foundation at PO Box 611, Allendale, NJ 07041.



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