



The Black Dragon Bulletin

Fall 2023

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If you are like me, you are astounded with how fast the semester has gone. It will only continue to accelerate as you continue on your path to commissioning. One truism in leadership is that there is never enough time. You will find you always wish that you had more time: more time to focus on training, more time to communicate with your division, more time to devote yourself to the care of your Sailors/Marines, more time to take care of your own needs, and, most importantly, more time to think about how you will lead. Once you get your feet on the deckplates there is so little time for that. So, use this time - any spare time that you have - to think about how you want to lead once you hit the fleet. Ask yourself, am I the person that I want to be as a Division Officer or Platoon Commander. What virtues do I still need to develop? What vices need to be eliminated? It gives me so much pleasure to see how each of you has taken up this challenge to hone your character toward that end. Keep up the great work Black Dragons and don't lose sight of the vision.

Very respectfully,

CAPT Paul De-Marcellus
Commanding Officer
NROTCU Rutgers/Princeton University

Statue and Memorial of Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone, the first Marine to be awarded a Medal of Honor during World War II.³ Gunnery Sergeant Sandoval chose this location for his promotion to remind us of the lineage of sacrifice we uphold through service.

New Student Orientation (NSO)

By MIDN 3/C Ryan

New Student Orientation (NSO) is the first exposure after NSI that 4th class Midshipmen have to the unit. In many ways, NSO sets the standard for camaraderie, teamwork, self-discipline that NROTCU Rutgers/Princeton will expect out of the fresh Midshipmen. Friday afternoon, the Midshipmen travelled to Fort Dix and learned how to properly pack and maintain equipment before retiring to their racks. At 0500, the 4/Cs woke up eager to learn drill from Master Sergeant DeBord. Afterwards, the Midshipmen transitioned into a motivating Saturday morning PT. Once they had woken up and blood was flowing to their brains, the Midshipmen were briefed as to how to properly wear their uniforms and instructed on common Naval courtesy. The Midshipmen then donned their packs and set out on a quick ruck to the obstacle course. At the obstacle course, the Midshipmen split up into squads and raced to hone their teamwork abilities. After the Midshipmen had exerted themselves, they were brought to a field and taught Land Navigation, an essential skill for any prospective Marine options. Finally, the Midshipmen rested in the great outdoors, sleeping underneath the stars. The next morning, they packed their gear, returned to Fort Dix, and were dismissed from NSO.

Midshipmen Opinions of NSO:


“The best part had to be the obstacle course. Rolling in the mud, climbing trees, being yelled at by Master Sergeant—nothing compares. Easily my favorite PT.”
-MIDN 4/C Todd

“NSO taught me the importance of holding each other accountable and making sure no one gets left behind. During our obstacle course race and our, we had to stay as a unit, meaning our squad was only as strong as our weakest link. It has helped set the tone for life as a midshipman. We are always supporting each other, not only at PT and during ROTC events, but also in the classroom and in any other pursuits.”
-MIDN 4/C Bassi

4/C MIDN Attack the Obstacle Course in Squads

Tunnel for Towers: Helping America to Never Forget September 11, 2001.

By MIDN 3/C Miller



If you ask around the unit, most will agree that the Tunnel to Towers run is one of the most profound events we take part in each year. The 5k run from Brooklyn through the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel finishes in lower Manhattan at Ground Zero. The path that the battalion has now ran on for two consecutive years follows the same heroic steps taken by FDNY firefighter Stephen Siller on September 11th, 2001. Following the meaningful experience for those who attended last year, the battalion rallied nearly every member to partake in the event this year. Staff and midshipmen woke up early and gave up their Sunday to represent our unit and to contribute to the legacy that the Tunnel to Towers organization promotes. The overcast and stormy weather did not dampen the mood of the event. Every individual was motivated as we arrived in Brooklyn and knocked out 2071 pull-ups collectively, one for each step in the Twin Towers. This touching and challenging activity put into perspective what individuals had to endure on 9/11 and in the months and years that followed. The run was an inspiring event for us all as we ran through the tunnel and were cheered on by spectators and fellow runners alike. Finishing to the roar of the crowd at the base of the World Trade Center stands a vivid memory in my mind, and I am confident that many other members of the battalion could say the same. Following the run, several members of the staff conducted a PME. Heroic actions by individuals on 9/11 and service members in following years as well as recounts of personal experiences were all covered. The battalion benefited greatly from hearing these stories. This PME, the run, the inspiration from fellow runners and spectators, our unit pull-up challenge, and the comradery of the event was a beBer way for the midshipmen of the Black Dragon Battalion to spend their Sunday than any alternative. I am certain that everyone is eager to take part again next year in this newly formed tradition that continues to inspire and teach us.

GySgt Sandoval briefs the Battalion on the sacrifices and dedication of the heroes who served during 9/11.

Nuke Club: Preparing Nuclear Officers

By MIDN 1/C Leaver

When Midshipmen are in the Fall of their final year in NROTC, they will get the opportunity to learn about their career path in the United States Navy in the class's Service Selection brief. At this service selection, Midshipmen have an opportunity to serve in the nuclear Navy as either a Submarine Warfare Officer or a Surface Warfare Officer - Nuclear Trained (SWO Nuke).

If selected for Submarine Warfare and after commissioning, the newly pinned Ensign would attend Nuclear Power School in Charleston, South Carolina, to learn about science and technology relating to nuclear propulsion. After they complete that, they will be sent to Prototype, either in Charleston or Ballston Spa, New York. There, they will apply what they have learned at Nuclear Power School to real nuclear reactors. To finish their schooling prior to their submarine assignment, they'll attend the Submarine Officer Basic Course in New London, Connecticut where they will learn about submarine operations. Now they can finally be attached to their submarine that was selected for them as a division officer.

SWO Nuke options have a different path. SWO Nukes will be attached to a surface ship first where they'll go to Basic Division Officer Course for nine weeks prior to going to their ship. Once they get qualified as Surface Warfare Officers, they'll go to Nuclear Power School and then Prototype. Afterwards, they will then be attached to an Aircraft Carrier's nuclear power plant.

One of the major steps of being a Nuke are the interviews conducted at the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program in Washington, D.C. This consists of two or three technical interviews based on Calculus and Physics, and a personal interview with the Director of the Program. Myself and MIDN 1/C Spera founded Nuke club initially as a means of helping other Midshipman in preparing for these interviews. With us and MIDN 1/C Ladzinski passing our interviews, we provide resources and tips to those in any step of the way to their interview process. However, this is not all we do. We wanted to stand out as something more than just another academic resource for Midshipmen, so we also looked into other opportunities to get experience in the real world. We intend on a field trip to New London Connecticut as well as to attend the commissioning of the USS New Jersey (SSN-796) all as exclusive events for Nuke club. We are also looking into other events in order to gather interest in our club, even from those who do not intend to be a Nuke.



The USS New Jersey is a Pre-Commission Unit 796 Virginia-class submarine. It is set to commission April 6th, 2024.



Naval Nuclear Power School in Charleston, SC

Fall FEX

By MIDN 2/C Vincent

On October 28 th , NROTC Black Dragon Battalion conducted a FEX for its Marine Option Midshipmen. This was a phenomenal opportunity for MIDN to practice hiking, land navigation, SULEs (Small Unit Leadership Exercises), and other skills needed for OCS and beyond.

MIDN mustered at the Sonny Werblin Recreation Center's parking lot at 0515 to conduct gear accountability, weigh packs for the hike, and be issued rifles. They then performed a six-mile timed hike with 90lb packs from Werblin to the Rutgers Ecological Preserve to train cardiovascular endurance and

practice hiking with weight. This movement allowed MIDN to gain experience and reps on how to correctly pack gear, adjust straps, and wear the pack as well as become familiarized with treating hot spots and other skills essential to hiking effectively.

The next event was a timed land navigation exercise.

Land navigation is a graded event at OCS

and at TBS in addition to being a critical skill that

Marine Corps Officers need to be proficient at. In

order

to train that ability, MIDN were given six coordinate points to plot on a map, and they then put their map and compass training into practice in finding the locations. After the 3-hour time limit was up, MIDN returned to packs and had a quick break to eat chow, top off their canteens, and prep for SULE lanes.

SULE prac-app then lasted for the rest of the FEX.

MIDN were given the opportunity to receive

and brief 5 paragraph orders to their fireteam leaders

and then execute their small unit attacks. OPFOR

(opposition forces) were composed of Navy MIDN

who volunteered to help serve as the enemy in the

situations. CAPT Paragone designed a series of attacks

to help prepare MIDN for OCS style SULE lanes,

which are graded events at the training, and MECEPs

helped direct OPFOR and accompanied as assistant

graders for the events. All MIDN going to OCS this

summer were given a chance to lead their own squad

attack and received a wealth of knowledge from CAPT

Paragone and the MECEPs in feedback on their

performance.

Once MIDN had completed their allocated reps of

these exercises, MIDN returned to the unit to

unload gear and take accountability for rifles and

other issued items. Overall, the FEX was a success and

offered MIDN hands-on experience in developing

skills essential to passing OCS and being prepared for

the fleet.

MIDN prepare for their 6-mile ruck in the morning for the FEX



MIDN rest and receive a brief before land navigation

Turkey Bowl

By MIDN 3/C O'Neill

Every year around the time of Thanksgiving, the Rutgers ROTC program and Rutgers Vet House gather together to play a knockout-style football tournament known as the Turkey Bowl. Taking over the team this year as the head coach/quarterback was a substantial task, since winning the Turkey Bowl means yearly bragging rights over Vet House, Army ROTC, and Air Force ROTC. Initially, I figured using the help of our seniors on the team, MIDN Leaver and MIDN Spera, who were motivated to win their first ever Turkey Bowl, as a respective offensive coordinator and defensive coordinator would be helpful since both had varsity high school football experience. Both these First-Class Midshipmen along with myself created an outstanding playbook that would be heavily practiced and implemented in the Turkey Bowl. The Navy ROTC team started practicing in mid-September and we practiced weekly or biweekly on our own time outside of PT in order to prepare for the Turkey Bowl. Before the tournament began, we had scrimmaged the Air Force ROTC team, since we were not playing them in the real tournament, and the Navy ROTC team excelled. We had won 28-0 with two rushing touchdowns by MIDN Wang, and single receiving touchdowns by MIDN Morros, and a pick-six by MIDN Donofrio; all notably Fourth-Class Midshipmen. Beginning the tournament, our first-round match in the "Rutgers Military vs. Veterans Bowl" was Vet House at SHI Stadium. Once again, the Navy ROTC team found success in a 16-6 victory with an opening kickoff safety and single receiving touchdowns by MIDN Spera and MIDN Redillo, respectively. For the championship game, it was a cold, windy, rainy Tuesday night before Thanksgiving in which we would be facing Army ROTC once again in the championship game at SHI Stadium. In the first half, we were down 18-0 due to Army's effective run plays on offense. However, in the second half, our defense shutout Army entirely and we had a would-be receiving touchdown by MIDN Spera get called dead as he was turning up field past the Army defenders. Unfortunately, the Navy ROTC team was not able to win the championship, losing 18-0, but we were presented with the "Rutgers Military vs. Veterans Bowl" trophy at the end of the tournament. Overall, it was an extremely fun and team-building experience led by a predominately underclassmen team. Our entire team excelled in how we practiced and played, and I look forward to taking on our competition again next year to hopefully come out as champions.



MIDN participating in the event pose in front of the stadium
after working hard to compete at Turkey Bowl

Training to Service Select Naval Special Warfare

By MIDN 2/C Imperial

Tuesdays for MIDN 2/C Aguero and I involve classes, studying, and a seven hour block devoted to preparing for SOAS (Seal Officer Assessment and Selection) and BUDs (Basic Underwater Demolition Seal Training). Commuting about an hour and a half to the training program at the YMCA in Greenwich, CT, we have a unique opportunity to reflect on our own progression towards becoming SEAL officers. The cohort at the training program is diverse, with men ranging in ages from 17 to their late twenties. Some are eager to become SEAL officers (which entails completion of and selection from SOAS AND BUDs), while others are planning to become enlisted SEALs (which requires completion and selection from BUDs). Occasionally, the group attracts individuals interested in joining Army or Air Force Special Warfare Units, but the training is tailored towards those interested in becoming SEALs. As such, the training involves water familiarization; this usually means practicing swim technique, life saving skills, treading water with weight, breathholding, and underwater knot tying. Being comfortable in the water is paramount, especially during phase two of BUDs (dive phase). MIDN Aguero and I are sure to include regular swimming in our own training schedules, and, in keeping with the traditions of the Black Dragon SpecWar club, have worked with other midshipmen who are interested in Naval Special Warfare to develop their swim technique.

The training also involves a great deal of rucking and calisthenics. The primary function of this training is to use the body to challenge the mind. Instructors demand excellent form and will have the cohort conduct exercises for an unknown duration. At the monthly training events that span one weekend, we conduct most of the exercises while being cold and wet. Such conditions help prepare us for trails that we will face in Coronado, CA. Training at this program, however, is not sufficient. MIDN Aguero surely has his own fitness goals and training plan.

I have prioritized strength training over the past semester and have been successful in gaining about 7-8 lbs of lean muscle mass. My increase in strength has slowed my running, however I am very comfortable doing the notorious boat and log drills that challenge many leaner body types. MIDN Aguero and I have both identified the individuals who are interested in Special Warfare and are continuously working to provide guidance and feedback in both the areas of leadership and fitness. Looking forward, MIDN Aguero and I will be tailoring our training to the upcoming challenges of the Naval Academy SEAL screener and the NSW Exposure Weekend in Coronado.

Military Ball

By MIDN 1/C Freeman & MIDN 2/C Coppola

The annual Military Ball is a quintessential event in every service member's career. It is the culmination of all the highs and lows a unit goes through throughout the year. This November, NROTC Rutgers/Princeton and their guests celebrated the 248th Marine Corps birthday at Pierre's of South Brunswick, which included a dinner, a cake-cutting ceremony, and dancing. The Black Dragons have been able to honor this sacred tradition for another year with the help and diligence of our very own Midshipmen. MIDN Miller and other members of the Scarlet Anchor Society were able to allocate funds to bring this event to life. Additionally, MIDN Agüero and MIDN Imperial worked in tandem to ensure this wonderful event had an even greater Guest of Honor. The battalion was graced with the presence of RADM Ryan Scholl.

Midshipmen Opinions of Milball:

"I thought the Mil Ball was a great way to celebrate the Navy and Marine Corps in a formal setting and get to socialize more with others in the battalion. The remarks from the Guest of Honor and the tradition that was displayed were very encouraging and moving, especially for a young Midshipman. Overall, I highly enjoyed my evening!"

- MIDN 4/C Nicklas

"It was great to have a chance to be a part of the ball and start the ceremony!"

- MIDN 3/C Labissiere (Color Guard)

"The battalion looked very sharp in their dress blues. I am always fond of seeing the guests and family members brought to the event, which are often the friends, partners, and supporters that are so essential to our success. Between the bonding opportunities and heartfelt messages from speakers, this Mil Ball was a successful event in my eyes."

-MIDN 1/C Bowman-Davis

MIDN enjoy the excellent dining experience at Milball

Memories from Military Ball



Left to Right: MIDN 3/C Rogers, Labissiere, Miller, O'Neill, Foran, Dominguez, Ryan. The entirety of the 3/C class before MIDN Bhuyan and Le joined in the Spring.



Left to Right: MIDN 4/C Jungels, MIDN 3/C Ryan, MIDN 2/C Imperial. A Midshipmen "line of succession" from the mentorship program.



MIDN 2/C Redillo presents RADM Ryan Scholl with appreciation from NROTC Rutgers/Princeton for his appearance and wisdom



MIDN and CAPT DeMarcellus receive the guest of honor

Cornell MEC

By MIDN 1/C Freeman

The Cornell University Military Excellence Competition (MEC) is an annual function hosted in Ithaca, New York. It allowed the Black Dragons to demonstrate their drill expertise and athletic prowess, all in competition with other Navy ROTC units and service academies. Our battalion began preparing for this day as early as August, as Midshipmen signed up for any of the MEC's nine events: The 4x400 Relay, 5K Race, Fitness Medley, Tug-of-War, the 4x100 Freestyle Swim, 4x100 IM Relay, Individual 50yd Freestyle, Squad Basic Drill, and Color Guard. As the day drew closer, and all swim events were eventually canceled, our Midshipmen adapted and showed out. Many rose to the occasion and flooded to the 5K run, a second 4x400 relay team was formed, and half a dozen participated in the daunting Fitness Medley, which consisted of a maximum plank, maximum pull-ups, bench presses, and the 5K. The Black Dragons were eager to represent our battalion, with many joining these events right as they began. NROTC Rutgers/Princeton was loud and proud, whether it was to cheer on our Midshipmen that earned individual medals, or to scream in unison during the Tug-of-War. Every year, the MEC is a full day of trials and tribulations that offer our unit a special opportunity to work hard as a team. We left Ithaca exhausted, but took immense pride in each other and ourselves.

“Through commanding Color Guard for the MEC I learned that at any moment plans can change, and that leaders need to rely on not just their leadership skills but especially on their followers. The members of my color guard helped me to get through last-minute problems,”
- MIDN 2/C Serrano



Left to Right: MIDN Collins, Agüero, Casano-Boris, White, Redillo.
These MIDN display the medals they won from competing in various events during the MEC

MIDN struggle in Tug of War versus Cornell



“I can imagine no more rewarding a career. And any man who may be asked in this century what he did to make his life worthwhile, I think can respond with a good deal of pride and satisfaction: ‘I served in the United States Navy.’”

-President John F. Kennedy



Service Selection 2023

Service selection occurs during a Midshipman’s senior year and is the process of that Midshipman being selected for their future career in the United States Navy. Naval ROTC Midshipman can select into a variety of careers that will place them into critical positions as leaders in the Navy. At the beginning of the year, each senior will fill out a form with their top five preferences as to which position they are interested in and during service selection, they will find out which position they have been selected for. For Marine Option Midshipmen, this process will occur after they complete The Basic School (TBS). NROTC Rutgers/Princeton treated their 1st class Midshipmen to a fun night of axe throwing after revealing where these future Naval Officers would spend their coming years in the service of the Navy.



Left to Right: ENS Sisbarro, MIDN Leaver, MIDN Spera, MIDN Walsh, LT Garrett, MIDN Ladzinski, MIDN Freeman, ENS Paccione, MIDN Bowman-Davis, CDR Eason, LT Warner

MIDN 1/C Bowman-Davis



Maritime Cyber Warfare Officer

MIDN 1/C Collins

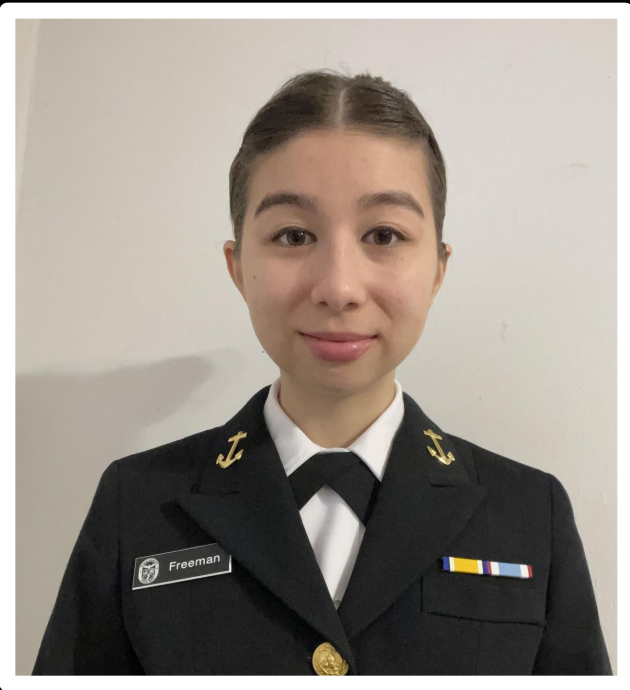


Surface Warfare Officer

MIDN 1/C Freeman

MIDN 1/C Ladzinski

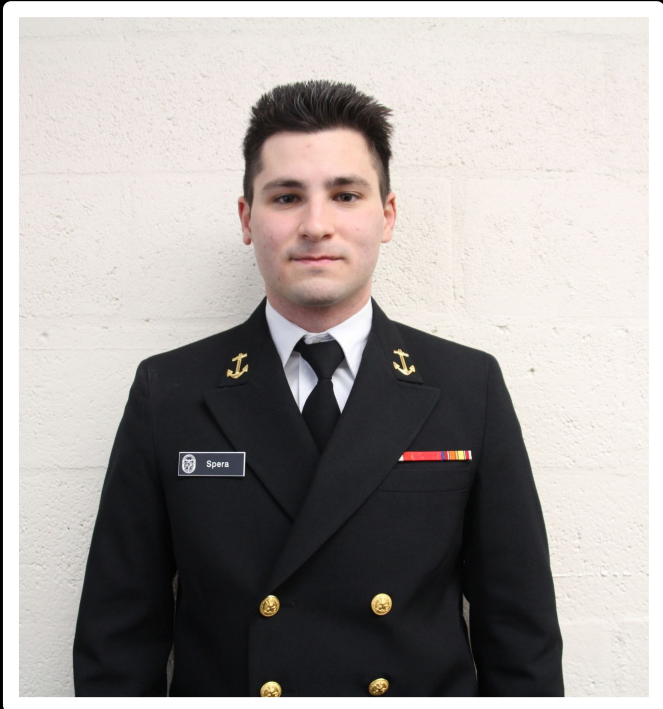
MIDN 1/C Spera



Surface Warfare Officer



Cryptologic Warfare Officer



Submarine Officer

Closing Remarks

By : MIDN 3/C Ryan

I believe that the Naval ROTC Program has done an incredible job into developing both myself and the Midshipmen around me into individuals who are both disciplined and driven in their desire to serve the United States Navy. We still have so much to learn, but I am incredibly thankful for the opportunity that Naval ROTC has given me. I believe that the friendships and challenges we experience in this unit will live past the relatively short time we are given here. Thank you to all who have made the Fall 2023 semester fantastic!

The Black Dragon Battalion after the first day of PT

