



The Black Dragon Bulletin

Spring 2023

Hello Midshipmen, Family, and Friends,

Greetings from San Diego where CORTRAMID is providing some of our Midshipmen their first taste of the fleet and a sampling of the different warfare communities that they might choose to select. This duty in San Diego has provided me an opportunity to reflect on this last semester, surrounded by the Sailors and Marines that the Black Dragons will soon be leading and the combat platforms upon which they will be doing so.

We just graduated the largest class of new Ensigns and 2nd Lieutenants that our unit has ever produced after probably the most complex semester that we have seen since prior to COVID. Not only that, but we executed the mission despite serious manning challenges for our staff. This challenge was only overcome by great teamwork and dedication across both unit and MIDN staff. From continued traditions of Mess Night and Senior dinner, to attending new leadership conferences and MEC events, to continued engagement with our military's highest Officer and Enlisted leaders - our unit has continued to seek out and take advantage of new opportunities to develop our future leaders.

I am particularly delighted to welcome the new members of our staff to the team! Ms. Carla Benton, the unit's Military and Family Life Counselor has been serving our MIDN at both Rutgers and Princeton since mid-Spring semester and Diana Rodriguez, our new Supply Tech, arrived from California just after our commissioning. We are so excited to have you join us!

I hope that all the Black Dragons are making the most of their experiences in the fleet this summer and I have no doubt that you are representing the unit well. I wish you good rest as well as we get ready to welcome the new class of Midshipmen to the unit. I encourage you all to spend time thinking about what you hope to accomplish this coming semester and, for those of you with billets, how you want to execute your new roles.

Be safe and come back ready for an awesome Fall semester!

Very respectfully,

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

Newly-Commissioned ENS Seo cuts the
commissioning cake with CAPT De-Marcellus

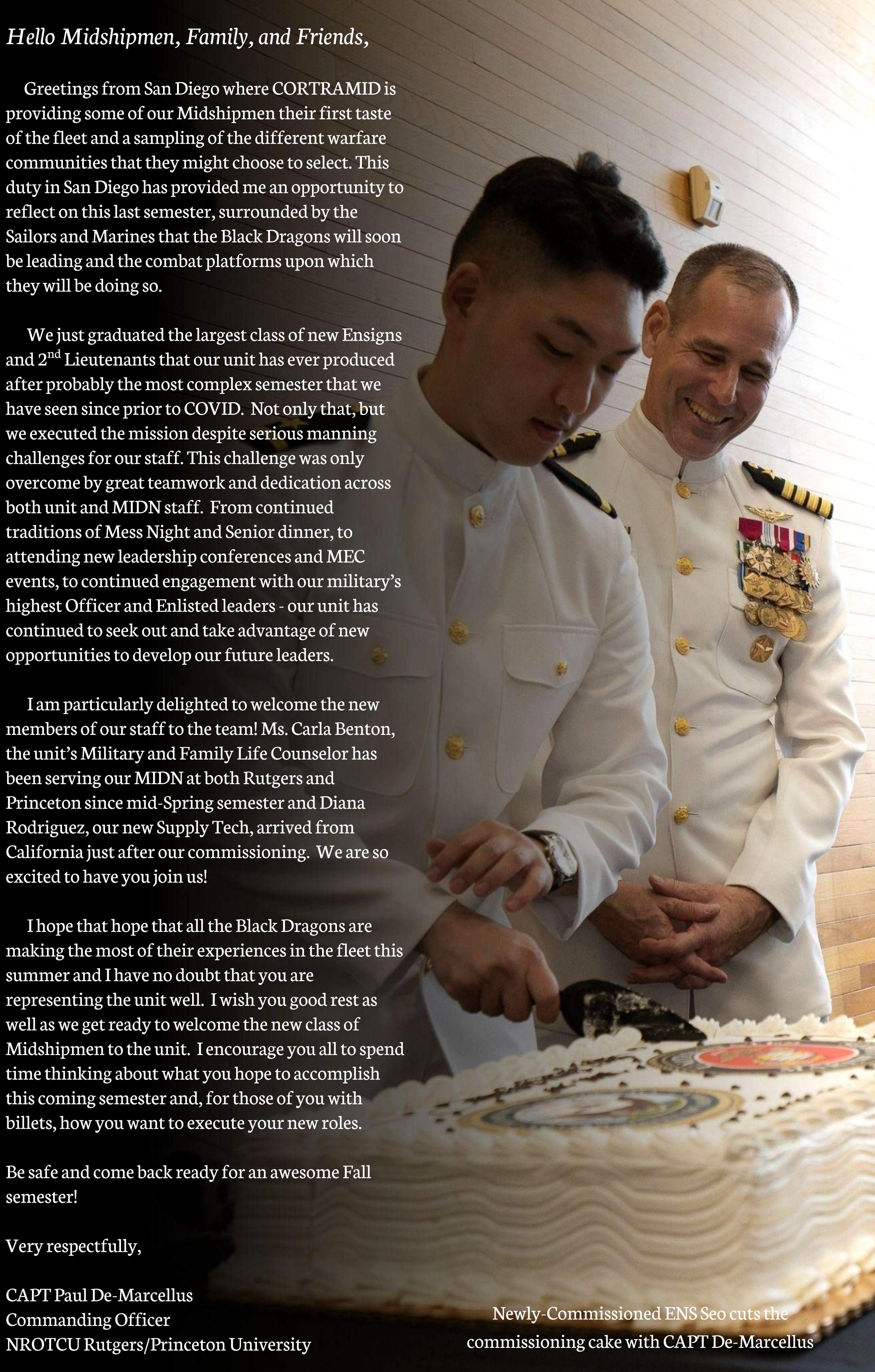




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Reflecting on a Successful Semester: Thank You to the Black Dragon Battalion

MIDN 1/C Leon, Battalion Commanding Officer 



“ [We] came into this program 4 years ago as strangers and kids and we now leave as friends and Officers. [I am] humbled and honored to join the ranks of the Marine Corps and the Navy alongside each one of you.”

-MIDN 1/C Leon speaks to the graduating 1/C MIDN in his Final Remarks

As another great year on the books comes to an end and another class of seniors integrates into the Fleet, I want to thank all of the midshipmen, staff, and families for your continued support of our Midshipmen. I remember the feeling the first time I walked into NSO, I was nervous and excited to start this new chapter. Now that it comes to a close I am grateful for all the memories and opportunities to see this Battalion grow. I truly believe we have a remarkable Unit and the finest Naval Reserve Officer Training Program in the Country.

This semester has been an incredible ride and action-packed with a wide array of events. From beginning the semester on the Werblin PT Field and braving the cold climate, to pushing beyond our limits during Pool PT and treading with bricks. Fast forward to Khakis and Whites inspections, our annual Spring FEX down in Fort Dix. Lastly, our return to the Villanova MEC where the last time the Black Dragon Battalion was there was 2018! This Spring 2023 semester is certainly one to remember. I am sure we will remember this semester with fond memories and new lessons learned.

As BCO, I have had a special role in working with a great Top 4 team that has been dedicated to bettering our Battalion since the turnover from the last Midshipman Chain of Command. I am very proud of each and every one of you. I want to thank you for all your hard work and dedication on behalf of our team. As we look forward to a new semester and chain of command, I am confident that they will continue the mission statement of our program, forging the next generation of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Officers. I wish you all a great summer, enjoy your time off but don't lose sight of your goals and overall mission readiness. As always, one last time..keep attacking.

A Note From Our New Counselor

By Carla A. Benson

My name is Carla A. Benson, Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). I have the great pleasure to serve as the Military & Family Life Counselor (MFLC) at Rutgers & Princeton Universities ROTC programs.

As the MFLC, I am delighted to have the opportunity to be of service to those who have served our country and those who will serve. MFLC provides supportive, non-medical, confidential counseling to ROTC members, Command staff, and their families.

Please feel free to contact me at 640-230-2497 if I'm able to be of support, provide resources, or to schedule a session. All services are confidential. Thank you for your service and the opportunity to serve you all.



Not An Average Pentagon Tour

By MIDN 3/C Giovanni Iacobucci

When I was told that we were going to DC and touring the pentagon and the state department I had the expectation that this would be reminiscent of the tours I had in DC when I was in 8th grade: boring walks through important places being bombarded by information. I did not expect the experience we had. Meeting the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley, talking to him casually about where we were from and our goals. He then walked us into “The Tank” where we met the Vice CNO Admiral Franchetti, the highest ranking woman in the Navy, General Smith, the assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, as well as high command of Air Force, Army, Army reserve, and Space Force. After this experience we then went and met Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Troy Black. He met with us and gave us advice. He told us “you have two ears and only one mouth for a reason, listen.” which I will be sure to keep in mind in my career. After eating in the pentagon food court we took a trip over to the state department and met with Roland De Marcellus and he explained to us his career and the uses of the state department in the world. To finish off our trip we ended up all getting food before loading back up into the van we took and headed back to Rutgers.

Commander McVann's Insights on Naval Intelligence Amidst China's Increasing Aggression

By MIDN 3/C Redillo 

Commander McVann spoke at the Princeton Center for International Security Studies (CISS) on Thursday, February 16th, about his background, career, and how the recent developments of Chinese aggression are causing intelligence gathering and monitoring to shift the area of focus from the old sphere of focus the Middle-East to now the Indo-Pacific theatre. The US focus on Middle-Eastern intelligence gathering was from the post-9/11 involvement in that theatre. Commander McVann commented how the US is now refocusing its strategy to be prepared for a potential conflict with China and is increasing its research and understanding of Chinese culture, ambitions, language, and their One Belt One Road initiative that is a driving factor to recent aggression.

Commander McVann’s a distinguished naval intelligence officer with a background in aviation intelligence; I was eager to hear Commander McVann's thoughts on the new aspects of Naval Intelligence in the face of China's increasing aggression. He commented on the evolution of the military intelligence community over the years, especially with the rising great power competition.

Commander McVann's insights on different types of intelligence gathering, such as human intelligence (HUMINT), signals intelligence (SIGINT), geospatial intelligence (GEOINT), and open-source intelligence (OSINT), were particularly noteworthy. China's increasing use of advanced technologies and communication networks has made it necessary for us to improve our SIGINT capabilities to monitor and analyze their activities. On the other hand, HUMINT collection has become more important than ever to understand better the intentions and decision-making processes of China's military and political leaders.

Commander McVann’s background (in aviation intelligence) was another interesting discussion as he commented on monitoring China's military aviation developments and capabilities. His discussion on the need to stay abreast of new aircraft designs, technological advancements, and training methods was particularly insightful.

Overall, I found Commander McVann's insights to be highly relevant and thought-provoking. As an aspiring naval intelligence officer, I understand the importance of constantly evolving and adapting to new challenges. The rising threat from China has certainly made it necessary for us to reassess and expand our intelligence-gathering methods and techniques.



Commander McVann

Lessons on Sacrifice and Resilience from the 2023 Naval Academy Leadership Conference

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By MIDN 3/C Casano-Boris



The 2023 Naval Academy Leadership Conference (NALC) marked a pivotal shift in my perception of loss through the theme ‘Returning with Honor: Trials to Triumph.’ In learning from the stories of LT Brad Snyder, John Crowley, and Vietnam POWs RADM Shumaker, CAPT Plumb, and CDR Alvarez, I discovered what it truly means to sacrifice.

Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Officer LT Brad Snyder delivered the conference’s keynote address, where he discussed his 2011 deployment to Afghanistan and the day he overlooked his surroundings, causing him to step on a 40 lb IED. After sustaining complete vision loss, he outlined his journey to becoming a US Paralympian and winning a gold medal in the 400-meter freestyle exactly one year after his incident. What I gained from LT Snyder was his perspective on honor vs. glory. He shared that glory is cheap and easy, while honor is a “personal journey.” One should conceive of their identity not as a set of characteristics (blind, short, fast, etc.) but as a set of enhanceable virtues capable of improvement. In doing so, the perceptions of others are rendered inconsequential; you become the best judge of yourself and your fate. LT Snyder said at the start of his address that he was “grateful” for his blindness, which initially confounded me. However, by the end of his speech, I felt that he could see more clearly than everyone in the room. If you wish to see, look inside yourself.

On day two of the conference, by pure happenstance, I met one of my personal heroes: Mr. John Crowley. When I was seven years old and newly enamored by science, my father, a pharmacist, read to me the Pulitzer prize-winning book *The Cure* by Geeta Anand. This novel chronicles how Mr. Crowley saved his daughter and son from Pompe disease, a fatal muscular disorder incurable at the time. Through his battle with a diagnosis that could have proved debilitating to his children and his psyche, Mr. Crowley synthesized six essential traits for successful leaders: “humor & humility, hope, persistence & perseverance, optimism, sacrifice, and courage.” His speech felt wonderfully nostalgic, as the fire that his story lit within me as a child (which incited me to



MIDN 3/C Casano-Boris and her brother at US Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD.



MIDN 3/C Casano-Boris and new friends


study Molecular Biology at Princeton today) was rekindled with new fervor. If you wish to mobilize change, look inside yourself.

You had to be there to feel it; imagine a room filled with three Vietnam POWs (one who was the first US aviator taken captive), the entire brigade of USNA midshipmen, and hundreds of ROTC midshipmen. The energy was electric as voices of the Navy's past, present, and future intertwined through the rafters of Alumni Hall. For effect, the veterans spoke inside 8'x8' taped squares on stage to illustrate the extreme confinement they faced at the Hanoi Hilton. A quote that especially resonated with me came from CAPT Plumb, who reflected that "the bad part was not the thickness of the cell walls, but the 8 inches between my ears." Here, he was referring to the unimaginable mental battle required of the POWs and their fight to maintain freedom as a state of mind. In fulfilling their oath to serve our country, they persevered to return home with honor. If you wish to be free, look inside yourself. As human beings, we experience emotions of happiness, sadness, anger, and fear on a quotidian basis, but rarely do we feel inspired. The NALC 2023 conference afforded me a perspective of inexhaustible motivation, which I will rely on as I am met with my own adversities in life. Thank you to the Alumni and Friends of Princeton ROTC for allowing members of our battalion to attend this invaluable leadership conference and to learn what it means to be resilient.



From Left to Right: MIDN 2/C Leaver, MIDN 1/C Boisvert, MIDN 4/C Miller, MIDN 3/C Casano-Boris, MIDN 1/C Hill, MIDN 3/C Basile, MIDN 1/C Leon, MIDN 1/C Kowalewski, MIDN 1/C Redmond

Meeting General Cavoli

By MIDN 4/C Rogers 

“Attention on deck!” sounds across the dining room in Prospect house on Princeton campus. The gathered midshipmen and cadets quickly stand at attention, waiting for the guest to enter. “At ease” General Cavoli says as he enters the room.

On February 25th, Princeton midshipmen and cadets had the unique opportunity of meeting General Cavoli, who serves as the commander of the United States European Command and Supreme Allied Commander Europe. General Cavoli met with the midshipmen and cadets informally, and then gave the gathered ROTC students a speech on the expectations, goals, and challenges of being an officer. With the recent advancements in technology, from satellite construction to drone warfare, incoming junior officers must adapt to the changes in how war will be fought. General Cavoli also discussed how we must be ready for the difficulties that face all junior officers, such as learning to adapt to new environments and new billets, while also learning to lead others. The possibility of war against a peer enemy is very real for our generation, and we must prepare to rise to the occasion to fight for our country if needed. However, General Cavoli remarks, we are a group of bright midshipmen and cadets who have what it takes to become great leaders.

Alongside hearing from General Cavoli, Princeton midshipmen had the opportunity to speak with General Cavoli’s staff, and learn about the role of a General’s aide. It was fascinating to learn of all of the responsibilities that an aide has, from organizing meetings, briefing the general, and presenting topics which General Cavoli would like to make decisions on. The schedule of General Cavoli is extremely busy, traveling across the world to tackle important international issues.

Listening to General Cavoli was an educational and memorable experience, and has been an inspiring event for the Princeton midshipmen. I will take the lessons and insights from this experience to guide my future decisions through my journey in ROTC and the Navy.

MIDN 4/C Rogers listens to General Cavoli’s Remarks.



MIDN 3/C Imperial and MIDN 1/C Hilton with General Cavoli

Spring FEX

By MIDN 3/C Farin



This Spring, the Marine Options and our SpecWar brothers reenacted our favorite Sopranos episode by running into the Pine barrens outside of Fort Dix. In lieu of any Russian Commandos to pursue, we used this time to harden ourselves for OCS, SOAS, and anything that may occur when we hit the fleet.

After gear check, rifle issue, and a ride through the great Garden State we arrived and immediately established a sleeping area. We wouldn't rest for long though, as a 9 mile hike drew near we stretched before forming up and stepping.

This hike was the culmination of months of training and physical rigor. The terrain changed constantly, from the asphalt roads near the on-base housing to the dirt roads adorned with rocks and branches to sand that provided zero traction. With breaks every 3 miles to hydrate and heal, we traveled 9 miles with our 75-pound packs.

There was no time to rest after it finished, as a wildfire sweeping through the area felt the need to interrupt our training. Quickly loading our things into the vans we relocated to a different site. Once we set up our new site we learned about fire watch procedures and the mission of the interior guard before getting some sleep.

The next day began at 0600 where we prepared for a day of Small Unit Leadership Exercises (SULE) which brought us off the beaten path (and through a swamp) in the Fort Dix wilderness. These exercises will be a key part of the OCS experience and getting exposure in a controlled environment will be crucial to success.

MIDN 1/C Kehrle during the spring FEX



MIDN 1/C Leon



Marine and Special Warfare MIDN cross a road

Mess Night: A Memorable Event of Humor and Camaraderie

By MIDN 2/C Freeman



Mess Night is one of the most memorable events held by our unit. Midshipmen prepare for days in advance to target other members of the Battalion and recount mistakes they have made throughout the year- missing a PT workout, wearing an unkempt uniform, and other “heinous acts.” Absolution is earned through acting out skits and sipping from a sour, hot-sauce based concoction known as “the grog.” Never, in times of regular, routine operations, would our unit condone MIDN Smith referring to MSgt Debord as a “pillow princess.” But at Mess Night, everything is fair game, and everyone’s sins are put on display.

The skits themselves- or “fines”-- are an overwhelming display of energy. Two underclassman dueling with foam pool noodles made me forget who was even being fined, or what it was even for. I had the remarkable opportunity to hear MIDN Kehrle’s voice practically develop nodes, because every word he shrieked was cranked out so painfully that I knew his fining was solely based in passion, and his resolve could not be shaken. MIDN Collins was sentenced to singing(?) a duet with MIDN White, and that moment showed me a level of true brotherhood that we should all aspire to find someday in our lives. MIDN Sisbarro also displayed his musical gifts with an incredible serenade that left me not only breathless with laughter, but also afraid. For the rest of my life, I will remember scheming with MIDN Miller to target our beloved carpooler, MIDN Iacobucci, for “unsafe” drives to PT. Even moreso, I will remember the rush of buying a traffic cone from Amazon.com only 24 hours prior, hoping it would arrive on time, to subject him to wearing it on his head.

Overall, discipline, routine, and bearing are necessary for what we do as future officers in the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. However, Mess Night allows us to get a year’s worth of energy and humor out of our systems. There is value in these surges of morale. Mess Night allows us to see, in some unconventional, complicated way, there is legitimate mentorship occurring when a senior tells a freshman to curl up with a blanket and take a nap, while reciting to him a Dr. Suess bedtime story. Mess Night does not only make us laugh, but makes us truly known to each other. Reflection and memory become a team effort, as all things are in the Black Dragon Battalion.

Guest of Honor Commander Humphreys and Captain
De-Marcellus observe a fine

A Fine Compilation

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LT Garrett is served the Roast Beef of Old England.



MIDN 2/C Walsh presents a regulations-related fine.



MSG Debord calls a Sea Lawyer : SSG Sandoval



MIDN 3/C Iacobucci wears his fine



MIDN 1/C Hill tells MIDN 4/C Taylor a lullaby



MIDN 3/C Vincent tells grows a beard



From left to right: MIDN 2/ C Walsh, MIDN 2/C White, MIDN 2/C Collins



MIDN 1/C Rebelledo presents CDR Humphrey with the unit polo.

Reflections on a Visit to Normandy: Honoring Sacrifice and Appreciating Strategy

By MIDN 4/C Suringa



The raising of the flag on mount Suribachi in Iwo Jima, the destruction of the Swastika adorning the Zeppelinfeld in Nuremberg, Germany—Americans can reflect back on many moments of triumph during World War II. The invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944 exemplifies one of these moments. Today, Americans remember D-Day as a day where the United States and its allies turned the tide of World War II and tackled the Nazi Germany juggernaut. This spring break, I visited Normandy and gained a greater appreciation for the tactics used and sacrifices made during the 1944 invasion.

My tour group, a combination of students from a Princeton history course and seniors in the Princeton Army ROTC program, visited Omaha beach. The landing sight showed no signs of conflict; the beachside cottages, the long flat beach, and asphalt roadways made it hard to believe a massive invasion had occurred. However, the memorials present offered another perspective. They illustrated that American soldiers had fought and died on the beaches to create the peaceful landscape visible today.


Our group experienced the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial. The memorial honors the nearly 10,000 American soldiers buried there through chapels, overlooks, altars, statues, and other displays. The caretakers of the memorial granted the Army ROTC students, myself, and another Air Force ROTC student special access to the gravesite of a fallen Princeton alumnus. The rows upon rows of white crosses and Stars of David were a sobering reminder of the sacrifices made by so many to secure freedom and democracy.

Through our week in Normandy, we visited multiple landing sights, bridges, drop points, and bunkers, which gave me a greater perspective on the scale of the conflict. Operation Overlord and Neptune required extreme coordination. The ability of the U.S. military and its allies to create a coherent strategy over such a large area impressed me; forces from one sight we visited had to trust that the forces a two-hour bus ride away had achieved their objectives. The capability of forces inspired me and the group. andy moved and enlightened me. The tour gave me a greater appreciation for the sacrifices made by the Allied forces during World War II. From walking on the battered Pointe du hoc plateau and the sand dunes of Utah beach, I can remember the invasion as a pivotal moment in World War II.



MIDN 4/C Suringa at Pointe du Hoc

Unveiling the Battle of Princeton: A Transformative Experience for the Midshipmen

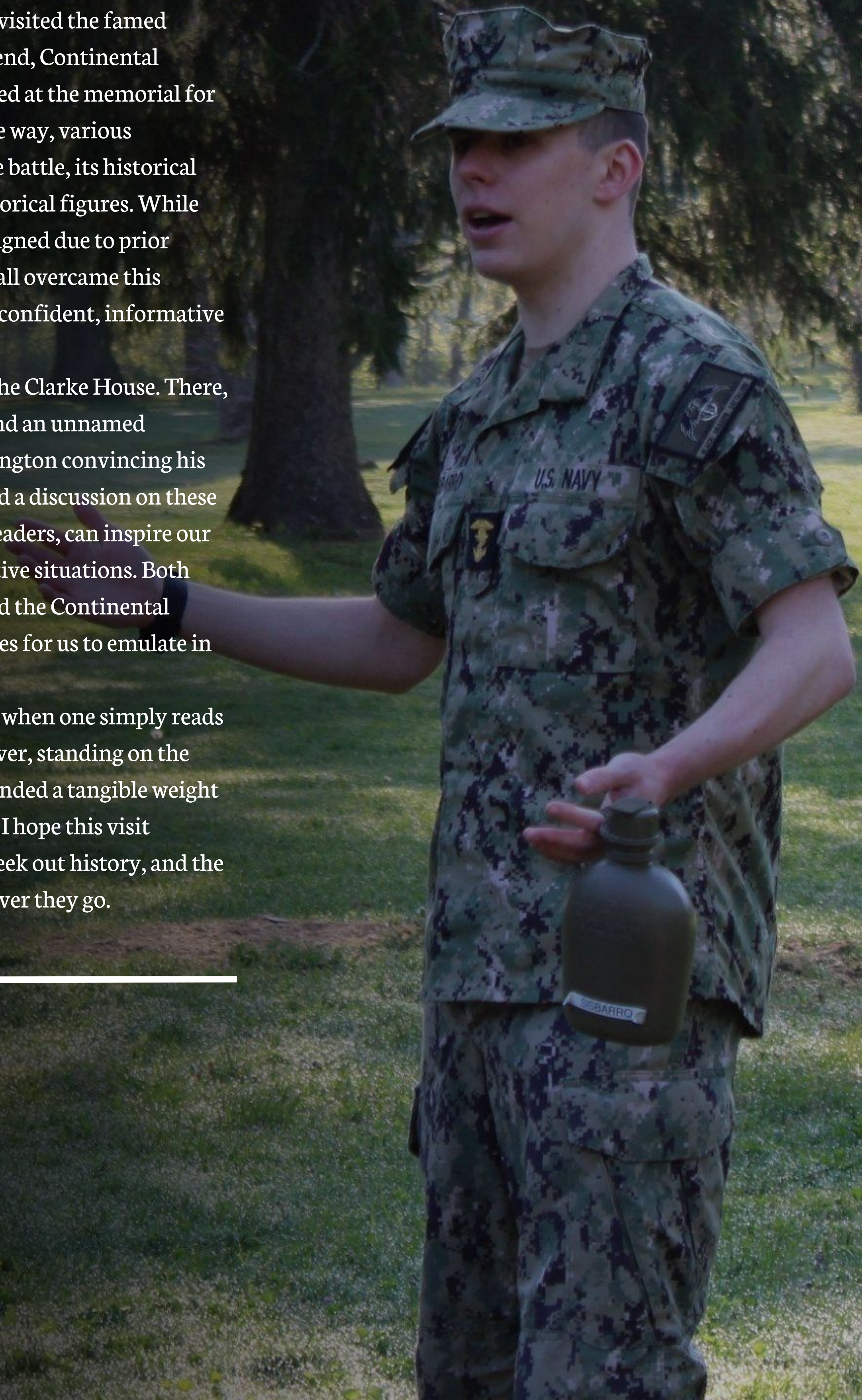
By MIDN 1/C Sisbarro 

The Battle of Princeton took place on January 3rd, 1777 and, along with the Battle of Trenton, demonstrated to the American public that the Continental Army could defeat the British. The site is only a 10 minute drive from Princeton University, but, for most of my four years, I remained completely unaware of its existence. This changed when, on April 21st, I led the unit on a tour of the Battle of Princeton site, along with my AOIC, MIDN Suringa.

The tour began near the historic Thomas Clarke House, progressed to the battlefield proper, visited the famed Mercer Oak (where, according to legend, Continental General Hugh Mercer died), and ended at the memorial for those who fell in the battle. Along the way, various midshipmen conducted briefs on the battle, its historical context, its impact, and relevant historical figures. While many of these midshipmen were assigned due to prior struggles with public speaking, they all overcame this challenge through practice and gave confident, informative briefs.

After the tour, we circled back to the Clarke House. There, we read Thomas Paine's *The Crisis* and an unnamed sergeant's account of General Washington convincing his troops to reenlist. We then conducted a discussion on these texts, focusing on what ways we, as leaders, can inspire our followers to persevere through negative situations. Both General Washington's leadership and the Continental Soldier's fortitude set strong examples for us to emulate in the fleet.

It's easy for history to not feel real when one simply reads it from a book or on a website. However, standing on the ground where men gave their lives lent a tangible weight to the location's history. Ultimately, I hope this visit inspired my fellow midshipmen to seek out history, and the lessons they can learn from it, wherever they go.





Top left: MIDN 2/C Collins briefs the battalion the Battle of Princeton's context.


Top Right: The Battalion transitions from the sight of Washington's rally to the sight of Mercer's death.

Middle left: MIDN Rogers discusses the battle's aftermath.

Middle right: MIDN 4/C Dominguez briefs on the events of the battle itself

Bottom: A memorial to General Mercer

A Semester as Princeton's PTI

By MIDN 4/C Ryan 

When I was in high school, I was on the wrestling team. We trained every weekday after school but I always wanted to put a bit more effort into the team. My sophomore year, I started going to condition on my own on Saturday mornings, breaking into the school football stadium to run the stairs. After a few weekends of repetitive conditioning work, I decided to invite my teammates to join me on Saturday morning. A few people joined me and I led my usual workout of stadiums followed by sprints and push-ups. After training, my teammates told me they had really enjoyed my workout and were looking forward to seeing what I had prepared for next week. Next week I had prepared the same workout I always did but my teammates clearly expected something different, so I felt pressured to create something new. I watched a few videos of exercises that would build stamina and strength and wrote them down to make them a plan. The next Saturday, my planned workout went incredibly well and I realized that I loved making conditioning plans for my team. I regularly made these plans for the rest of my high school experience. With this attitude, I expressed my interest to be the Princeton PTI in my Fall billet sheet. I had enjoyed PT during the fall semester, but I had heard a few people talking about how they had felt PT had become somewhat monotonous and boring. I wanted to change that and thought that I could apply my skill set from high school to the billet. I wanted to incorporate new workouts and exercises to PT so everyone could enjoy mandatory physical activity a little. However, unlike high school, I could not just break into the football stadium to incorporate a new activity into the PT plan. As PTI I was responsible for ensuring that PT ran smoothly and safely.

One activity that I love to incorporate into my training are stadiums, or running up and down the stairs of the stadium. I felt like it would be a fantastic way to improve my platoon's cardio while providing a new challenge. Unfortunately, organizing this activity came with a handful of challenges. First, I had to ensure that NROTC would be able and allowed to access the stadium, second, I had to confirm that it would be safe.

For the first task, I wrote to the Princeton athletic director and asked about the availability of the stadium. They said that it should be open and that it would be

Upper Class MIDN line up for the PRT run.

A Semester as Princeton's PTI

By MIDN 4/C Ryan



available to use as the rowing team also did something similar. This was great news, but I knew that I should also personally confirm that the stadium would be open, so I set my alarm on Thursday to wake up at 6 and check for myself. It was open and well-lit which was fantastic! Second, in order to confirm the safety of the new PT event, I wrote the PT plan, then ran through it the Saturday before we ran stadiums. Then, the morning of, I went to the stadium early and ran it again. I knew that incorporating new training into the PT plan was a risk that I had to bear, so I tried to mitigate that risk as much as possible. Luckily for me, the killers in 3rd Platoon executed stadium run PT flawlessly and I personally loved the new training stimulus. Another event that I loved to include in every PT plan that I designed was the “PTI push-up circuit.” I have done a good number of push-ups in my life. Both of my parents were in the Navy and as a result I have had to do push-ups as punishment from a young age. Now, I enjoy push-ups and train them often, but they can get boring very quickly. Thus, I do all of my push-ups to songs. I find a song that repeats a word often, then do one push-up every time that word is said. For example, during the first PT session I led, we did push-ups to “Thunderstruck” by AC/DC, doing a push-up every time they sang the word “thunderstruck.” I feel like this training approach to push-ups improves your pushing potential while also being a fun challenge. Consequently, I included this musical push-up finisher at the end of every Wednesday PT I led. Notably, I found my favorite song for push-ups is “Bicycle Race” by Queen to the word “bicycle.” As a final challenge on the last Wednesday PT before the PRT, I put on the song “Around the World” by Daft Punk, which says the word “world” 144 times over the duration of seven minutes. Unfortunately, no one was able to fully complete the challenge, but I intend to continue training to finish “Around the World.” As a whole, being the PTI has been a wonderful experience that I have learned a lot from. It has made me so much more comfortable and confident speaking in front of other Midshipmen and taught me a lot about coordinating events and training. At the beginning of the semester, I felt awkward and shy leading my fellow Midshipmen during PT, but by the end, I had no trouble instructing everyone to get on the deck and to do a push-up every time Taylor Swift says “shake” during “Shake It Off.” I would highly recommend this billet to anyone interested in creating PT plans or gaining confidence.

Marine Options complete their 3-mile run.

Captain Cunningham's Retirement Ceremony

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By MIDN 1/C Hilton



On April 6th, MIDN 3/C Imperial and I had the incredible opportunity to drive into New York City for a special event: the retirement ceremony of SEAL Captain Brian Cunningham. Our presence was requested alongside a group of midshipmen from SUNY Maritime and Columbia University, who were assigned as sideboys during the ceremony. This amazing experience was made possible by Commander Eaton, who had previously worked with CAPT Cunningham in his distinguished career.

The retirement ceremony took place at the solemn Ground Zero Memorial, and it was an honor to witness the presence of many distinguished guests, including Air Force Lieutenant General Dagvin Anderson. LTG Anderson, the Director for Joint Force Development at the Joint Staff, delivered a heartfelt speech that extensively highlighted CAPT Cunningham's remarkable professional accomplishments as the Director of Operations at U.S. Special Operations Command, Africa. Furthermore, CAPT (R) Leif Mollo, one of Captain Cunningham's former SEAL commanding officers, shared personal stories that gave us, the attending midshipmen, a valuable lesson about the multifaceted nature of a great military officer. Through these accounts, we were able to see how CAPT Cunningham excelled professionally as a military operator and planner, while also embodying qualities of kindness and care for his teammates.

During his own remarks, CAPT Cunningham spoke passionately about the sacrifices he had witnessed throughout his twenty-five-year career as a SEAL. He recounted attending forty-one funerals for members of his community and emphasized the importance of honoring their ultimate sacrifice. The setting of the September 11th memorial added immense power and poignancy to his words.

Prior to the ceremony, MIDN Imperial and I had the privilege of conversing with CAPT Cunningham, where we learned about his experiences as a SEAL and how September 11th had shaped his journey as a junior officer and throughout his entire career. He fondly recounted his time as a masters student at Princeton's School of Public and International Affairs, during which he temporarily coached Princeton's track and cross country teams. Overall, this entire experience provided both of us midshipmen with a unique opportunity to meet and interact with a SEAL who exemplifies the highest standards of personal and professional excellence as a top-tier Naval Officer.





**"I, having been appointed an officer in the
Navy/Marine Corps of the United States, as indicated
above in the grade of Ensign/Second Lieutenant do
solemnly swear that I will support and defend the
Constitution of the United States against all enemies,
foreign or domestic, that I will bear true faith and
allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely,
without any mental reservations or purpose of evasion;
and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties
of the office upon which I am about to enter;
So help me God."**



Commissioning 2023



We are thrilled to share the incredible news of 16 Midshipmen who have successfully commissioned as Ensigns in the Navy and Second Lieutenants in the Marine Corps.

Throughout the past four years, these exceptional individuals have demonstrated unwavering dedication and resilience in the face of unprecedented obstacles. Despite the sudden shift to virtual learning and rigorous safety protocols, they remained steadfast in their pursuit of excellence. Their ability to adapt, overcome, and succeed in such circumstances is a testament to their character and commitment.

These newly commissioned officers have undergone rigorous training, honing their leadership, discipline, and strategic thinking skills. Their exceptional character, defined by the core values of honor, courage, and commitment, will undoubtedly make them outstanding leaders in the United States Navy and Marine Corps.

Not only have these Midshipmen excelled academically and professionally, but they have also shown a deep sense of compassion and community spirit. Engaging in volunteer work and supporting those affected by the pandemic, they have exemplified the highest ideals of service and selflessness. Their contributions serve as an inspiration to us all.

As we celebrate this significant milestone, it is essential to recognize the unwavering support provided by their families, friends, and the entire Naval ROTC community. Their encouragement and guidance have played an instrumental role in the success of these exceptional Midshipmen. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who have contributed to their journey.

Let us collectively applaud and congratulate our 16 newest Ensigns and Second Lieutenants as they embark on their noble path of service, ready to protect and defend our nation. May they sail with fair winds and find success in all their future endeavors.

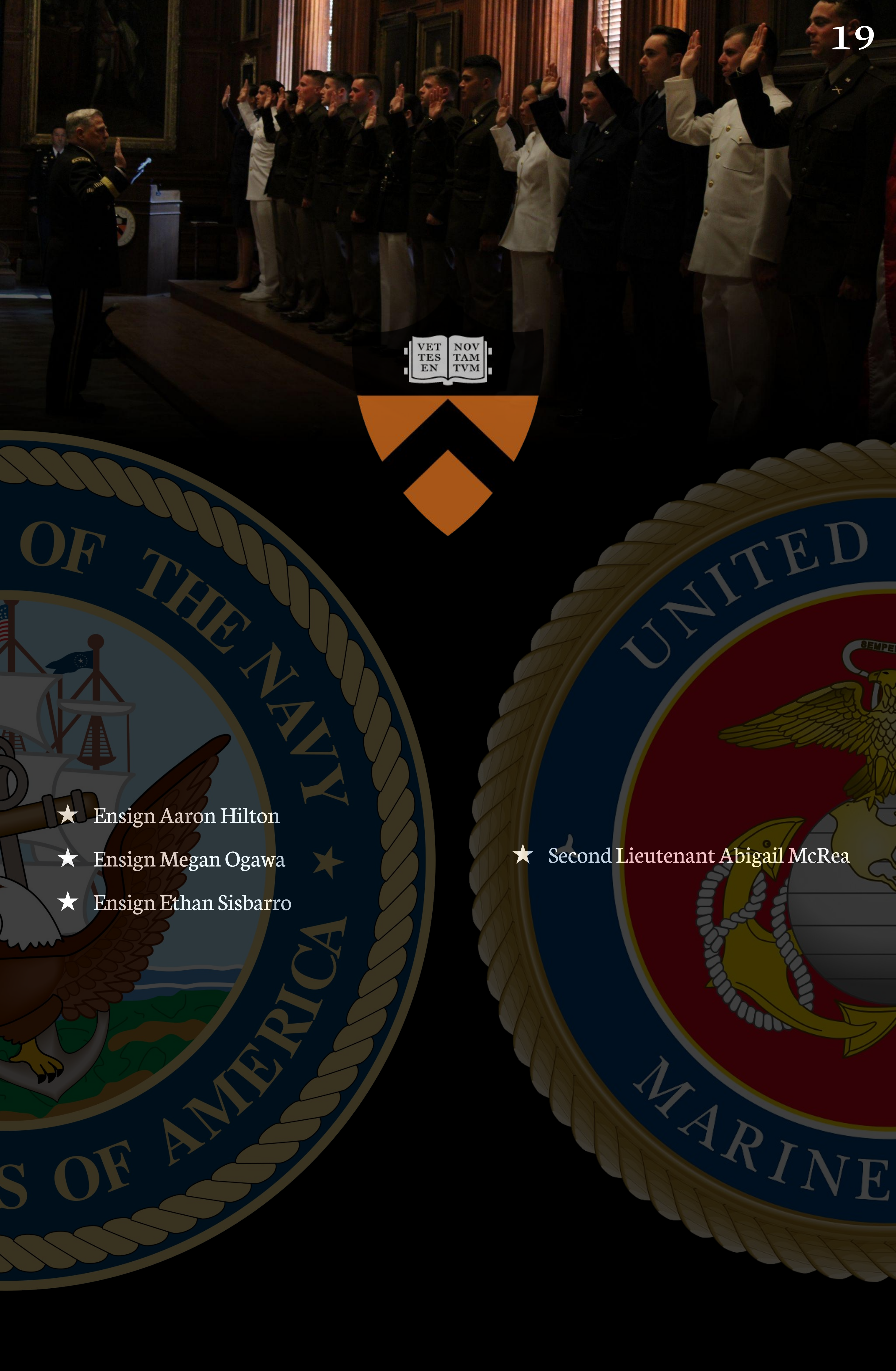
Sincerely,

MIDN 4/C Suringa, William J.
Newsletter Editor



- ★ Ensign David Boisvert
- ★ Ensign Lila Ginsburg
- ★ Ensign Joshua Hill
- ★ Ensign Ella Kim
- ★ Ensign Simon Kowalewski
- ★ Ensign John Paccione
- ★ Ensign Andrew Redmond
- ★ Ensign Chungwon Seo

- ★ Second Lieutenant Steven Kehrle
- ★ Second Lieutenant Sebastian Leon
- ★ Second Lieutenant Hugo Rebolledo
- ★ Second Lieutenant Robert Smith



★ Ensign Aaron Hilton

★ Ensign Megan Ogawa

★ Ensign Ethan Sisbarro

★ Second Lieutenant Abigail McRea

I have found that the U.S. Navy has a unique ability to take its members to unique and extreme places. NROTC Rutgers / Princeton has exemplified this ability, taking its students to the depths of the Pentagon, the hills of Princeton battlefield, or the tracks of Villanova. Such experiences have a powerful teaching ability; the greatest lessons in leadership and teamwork have come from events far from Rutgers or Princeton and in unfamiliar environments. As the editor of our unit's newsletter this semester, I have detected this theme; our midshipmen have grown best in uncomfortable situations in places they have never seen.

I would like to thank several key individuals that have helped me put this edition together. MIDN 3/C Mascarinas, from the moment I received this billet to the moment I submitted the newsletter, has provided guidance and assistance. He helped arrange articles, and showed me which software to use to organize the final product. MIDN 3/C Iacobucci provided similar support, and I greatly appreciate his advice and ideas.

