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Annapolis Division

## **My Training Experience: Petty Officer Leadership Academy (POLA)**

### **San Diego, CA Class 24**

During my 2010 summer break, I had the opportunity of going to San Diego, CA for Petty Officer Leadership Academy (POLA). Before I begin my adventure, here is some background about POLA. POLA is a training that is required of all cadets if they are planning to achieve the rank of Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class. At POLA you are taught many leadership and team working skills. It's here that you are developed into a versatile and well-rounded leader, capable of accomplishing any task necessary. The beginning of your leadership career starts at POLA!

As a Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class, I needed this training in order to rank up. Not only did I want to go, but I had to go; it was a requirement if I ever wanted to rank up. Once my orders and paperwork were completed, I could not wait to go! This would be my first training that I would be going across the nation. Thankfully, I was not alone, for one of my other friends, PO2 Cameron Field, needed this training too. Since the training started on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, Field and I flew out of the Washington D.C. area two days ahead, so we could get ourselves prepped and ready to go.

We had a lot of fun the first few nights; however our fun was just beginning. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, Field and I reported into the check-in site in full dress uniform with our gear. We waited with the other cadets until everybody checked-in. It was during this time that we made new friends right away, and all throughout our 9 days there we got to know our friends better than anybody else; we were a family. Once everyone arrived, we marched to the ship that we would be staying aboard.

We had the honor and privilege of staying aboard one of the Navy's newest Amphibious Landing Dock ships (LHD). The ship was LHD-8, the U.S.S Makin Island. Here is a little background about the ship: this ship was commissioned on 24<sup>th</sup> of October in 2009, it is one of the largest amphibious ships in the fleet, and it was named after the USMC Makin Island Raid in the Pacific during WWII.

During our first night, all the officers and cadets introduced themselves. We learned who our CO, XO, and other officers were and were told the planned schedule of our 9 days. Quickly thereafter, everyone was issued their course syllabus/study guide. In the study guide, there were all the lessons and power point presentations we would learn about over our course of the 9 days.

We pretty much just relaxed for the night, talked to our new friends, and went to bed shortly after.

Here is a schedule of our day:

- 0600 Reveille
- Have Chow
- Drill and Command (D&C) – marching practice
- Go to classroom and learn
- Have Midday Chow
- Learn more
- Have Evening Chow
- Learn some more
- Department time – Time where we could all just hang out and chill in our berthing
- 2200 Taps

Our days may seem boring, but not all days were like this, and even though we were constantly learning, we were still given the time to at least relax and have fun.

Some of the greatest experiences that I had experienced on this training was getting underway. The Makin Island got underway for 2 days. Because it is a new ship, the ship had to conduct its sea trials, which is when the Navy takes out the ship to test all its equipment, mechanical systems, and engines to see if they all function properly. We also got to march in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade in San Diego, CA. We all got dressed in our dress whites, and represented the Naval Sea Cadet Corps on that special day. Some other fun activities that we conducted, was our presentations. All the cadets were split into different teams, and were tasked with conducting a presentation of their own to the class. Some were lame, but most were funny. I think my group did origami, and that was pretty dull.

Although POLA seems fun, it wasn't all fun and games. In order to pass the training, you had to do well on all the tests. Every cadet needed above a 2.5 cumulative score in order to pass POLA. After we learned a chapter or section, we had to take test on the material we just learned. It was a constant process of learning, studying, and passing the tests.

On the day of graduation, everyone did not want to go home. We all were good, close friends by the end, and we did not want to say our goodbyes. After we packed up all our gear and got off the ship, we went straight to our graduation. Every cadet passed with a certificate in hand! Our Top Cadet of the training was PO3 Pushaw from a local division in San Diego, CA. Once we all graduated, I did not want leave! These guys were like my family, and to this day I miss them, but we keep in close contact. Not only did I learn to become a better leader, but I made some pretty awesome friends and had experiences of a lifetime. HOOYAH POLA CLASS 24!!