

Amphibious Operations Training 2011 Camp Perry, Ohio

On June 19 I arrived with Cadet Morrison in Cleveland Ohio to attend our first summer trainings of the year. Along with some other Sea Cadets, including Cadet Floyd also from Annapolis, we were picked up from the USO by a Marine Gunnery Sergeant who warned us not to harm the numerous swarming bugs known as may flies that had found their way into the vehicle, as they were the state bug and there was a \$1000 fine he would turn us in for. It was only shortly after we arrived to the Army/National Guard base that fellow Ohio cadets informed us that we had been duped.

The base itself wasn't too exciting, but it grew on you after a while. The Sea Cadets were organized into two barracks, and we also ended up using numerous buildings for classrooms and to station our headquarters.

Gunnery Sergeant Sutton ended up being a supporting officer for the Amphibious Ops training Floyd and I had showed up for. His son was our LPO, and our Commanding Officer was Captain Thompson, who went through both the enlisted and officer ranks in the Navy before retiring and becoming a Merchant Marine aside from being a diver, cop, and boat coxswain. It wasn't long before we were introduced to our LCM-8s, or Landing Craft Mechanized. These 60 ton tank carriers have been around since World War II, where they landed armor on beaches from Normandy to the Pacific. We did some deck work and got to crawl around in engineering, but before we were allowed to operate the LCMs, we had to learn everything about them. Every night before TAPs the seven of us in Amphib would study our packets and quiz each other on the crafts operation, handling, equipment, and history, as there was going to be a final exam.

In the mean time, we visited a several sites including a foundry owned by an ex-Navy boiler man. He made everything from copper coins to working cannons from the age of sailing ships, and we all had the chance to help out a bit with their construction (which was really quite a neat process by the way.) He most generously has allowed us to design a coin which he'll custom make for our training, and we should have them sometime next year. He also let us fire of a couple blanks from the cannon, and you wouldn't believe the pop some of those made! I didn't cover my ears once and my ears were ringing!

We also got to go to a real firing range and shoot .22 caliber pistols at targets with live ammo! We all qualified at least marksman, and on my first time shooting a weapon I qualified expert! Gunny was allowed to shoot off a tricked out .45 caliber gun, making him one happy marine.

Another day we all drove and preformed maintenance on an army LARC V, which stands for Lighter Amphibious Resupply Craft. Imagine a WWII duck combined with a small monster truck, it was one mean machine right down to the shark face painted on front.

We even got to help the Leaguers and Recruits with their swim quals at a local high school pool, where several cadets from Amphib saved a leaguer who suffered from sudden drowning syndrome.

All this was nice, but in the words of our LPO, we were there for the boats. After passing our Ohio Boating Safety course and getting our licenses (which we can use here in Maryland too) we set sail to two LCMs and even a tugboat by the name of Mighty Jessie. The LCMs, being as heavy as they were, were difficult to steer at first. They didn't even have a wheel! Just a little throttle Captain called a "sissy stick" controlled the hydraulics that moved the rudder, and the boat took a moment to respond. After a day or two of practicing maneuvering the boats, we finally were each able to fulfill the purpose of the training and land the boats up on beaches, where we gunned the twin engines and dropped the 14 ton ramp! As if the approach wasn't tricky enough, we then had to pull up the ramp and back off, performing a 180 to turn the boat about with smashing into nearby docks, and there were some really close calls! Being the boat coxswain was definitely an excellent experience I hope to have again! We all passed our final exam and I even received honor cadet!

I could go on talking about the seal inspired PT, the powdered eggs we had for morning chow which became tasty by the end, or even our visit to Marble Head Lighthouse, but instead I highly recommend other cadets to go to Camp Perry and experience Amphib for themselves. I was sad to leave July 2, but I'm absolutely glad I went! It was hands down my favorite training.

Electronics Training 2011 Great Lakes, Illinois

Arriving on the July 16 at Naval Station Great Lakes, I was eager to start my second training of the summer. This training was only a little bit longer than one week, but we still accomplished a lot. The main purpose of the training was to gain a basic understanding of electronics, and we used the same material, programs, and circuit boards that actual naval personal training to become ETs or FCs would use. We moved quickly through our

course work, and along the way learned everything from computational math, the difference between AC and DC current, trouble shooting basic circuits, and even how to read the colors off a resistor to tell us how many ohms it resisted. We spent most of the week learning in the ET building, but we also had the chance to go to a weapons simulator that realistically kept the recoil of the weapons using an air pump. We all qualified with the M9 pistol and fired .50cal machine guns in a scenario system which was a blast! Our Navy petty officers also gave us time to visit with other active duty personal to ask questions about how they came to be where they are today. Finally we had the opportunity to work with boatswain mates in training aboard a giant indoor mock up ship named the USS Whitehat. Our PT usually consisted of football games on the Navy turf field or the beach which was great fun. Chow was great as there were at least 4 different themed food sections you could choose from. Downtime was also interesting, as the barracks had a lounge area and we were allowed to visit the bases museum one day. I left ET training on July 24 as a more knowledgeable cadet, and I recommend the training to anyone interested in electronics.