

Cadet Travis Thomas

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This past summer from August 5th through the 12th myself and Cadet Seaman Temple trained at Coast Guard Station Ocean City.

The only thing we had to pay was \$57.80 for food for the week and that's it! So it was a pretty great deal. We clean and do the dirty work for them and they train us! While we were there we learned everything from how to tie knots to how to save a drowning victim.

On our first day there, they had us in rain gear scrubbing barnacles of the "24" which is a 24 foot short-range boat. Welcome to Ocean City, right? Not! But it was still fun! We did a lot of cleaning while we were there. Every single day we cleaned for at least three hours. "Welcome to the U.S. Military." the enlisted personnel said to us.

The station itself was amazing! It was kind of small so you got to know everybody but it was so fun. There are four boats stationed there; two 47 foot Motor Life Boats, one 25 foot rigid-hull response boat, and one 24 foot short-range boat. They use the 47s for cases that are off the coast of Ocean City or farther off shore and they use the two smaller boats for "back bay" operations where it is more shallow and the 47s draft would impede it from being able to make it to the case.

There are two kinds of cases that C.G. Sta. Ocean City undertakes. One is a "SAR" case, or Search and Rescue. And the other is an "L.E" case. When a SAR case comes in, the watch stander in the "COMMS" room, or communications room, sounds the SAR alarm; which is a switch underneath a red cover labeled "SAR ALARM" and when that

alarm went off, everyone went running to the COMMS room to see what they could do. And not shortly after that they watch stander would “pipe”, which is basically saying something over the station’s PA system, the names of the people who were needed to get underway and on which boat. Myself and Seaman Temple weren’t allowed to go on any real cases due to liability of us getting hurt or something along those lines but we did get underway three times. Once on the 24’ which we were doing a security patrol for a fireworks show, I was able to get underway on the 25’ doing training with the Maryland State Trooper helicopter 4 and the O.C. Beach Patrol, and once on the 47’ when we were going out to do some drills.

Over our course there, the State Trooper helicopter was at the station on three different occasions! Once it had to transport a wounded surfer, once while we were doing training with it and the Beach Patrol, and later that same day to pick up the Beach Patrol Rescue swimmers to go on a SAR case! I want to be a Coast Guard helicopter pilot so being able to see the helicopter up close and talk to the pilot, who is a former C.G. helicopter pilot, was a phenomenal experience! The evolutions we were doing with the helicopter involved the helicopter lowering a B.P. rescue swimmer via winch and we had to go and pick them up on the 25’. It was the most extraordinary thing I’ve ever been so lucky as to be able to partake in! Having a huge helicopter generating 80 knot winds 15 feet above your head, so loud you can barely hear yourself think will really get your adrenaline pumping!

On our last day there, we went out on the 47’ to do some drills. While we were underway myself, the other Sea Cadet who was also training there; Cadet Jones, and Seaman Temple got to strap on heavy weather belts and make our way from just forward of the bridge to the

bow of the boat while it was listing so heavily side to side that the sides of the boat were touching the water. While doing this, you must have one carbineer (there is two on a belt) clipped onto a D-ring on the rails that run along the bow at ALL TIMES! They stressed this very heavily due to the fact that they didn't want one of us falling overboard. It was also one of the most incredible experiences I've ever had due to the fact that for one, it was dangerous and exciting at the same time, and two because myself and the other Sea Cadets got to do something that only real Coast Guardsman get to do! Also, while we were underway we did man overboard drills where the coxswain threw a life buoy into the water and the crew had to immediately alert the crew by yelling "Man overboard port/starboard side!" and tell the coxswain where the man in the water was located so he could position the boat to rescue him. To do this, he aims the boat directly at the victim, then at the last second turns to the port side so the people in the "recess", which is a cut out portion of the side of the 47' so that it is easier to pull drowning victims out of the water. Also, the coxswain did "heavy weather turns" which are used in case a man falls overboard in cold weather and, due to the fact that humans can only survive in freezing water for two minutes, must take the boat from a full throttle to a complete stop and do a 180 degree turn in less than ten seconds! Doing that on a huge 47 foot boat with twin Detroit diesel engines is something everyone should experience once in their lifetime!

I was appalled at how skilled and coordinated the crew was there at C.G. station Ocean City! Everyone is so friendly and welcoming and are more than happy to help you in any way they can and tell you everything they can about anything they know! I met some great

people there and had an amazing time! I will definitely be returning there next summer!

It is an honor to be able to partake in trainings such as this one and do things that only real military personnel get to do! Also, I am honored to be able to call myself a United States Naval Sea Cadet. It is hands down the best program for youth that allows you to be able to get involved with the U.S. Military so closely!

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