

A Summer of Fun and Learning (Continued)

On *Eagle*, the days are long and there is a lot of hard work to be done. Each week, we stood watches in pairs. One week we would stand Helm and Lookout and Watch on Deck, and the following week we would stand engineering and CIC watch. Helm and Lookout was the same as on *Decisive*, so I knew what was going on early, and I helped my division get qualified quickly.

Watch on Deck involved working on the sails and hauling on lines. It was a lot of hard work. Some nights, we worked for hours to brace the yards of the masts to the right position. However, working so hard for so long brought my division together.

Engineering watch involved doing drawings of various Damage Control systems around the ship such as: the fire main, the AFFF system, CO2 system, and bilge rapid dewatering system. In addition to drawings, we were tasked to do rounds of the ship to check various places for fire and flooding. I learned a lot about engineering, and I value that for later experience as an officer.

During CIC watch, we did all kinds of things. Some nights, when we were able to see stars, we would do celestial navigation, which allowed us to establish the ship's position and eventually find our way from Mayport to Bermuda. I really enjoyed celestial navigation, and I appreciate how difficult it was to navigate for the early explorers who only had the stars to navigate by. CIC watch helped me appreciate navigation so much more and I love navigation now.

On *Eagle*, we had a port call almost every week. The first real port call was Bermuda. The water was a rich blue and the beaches had pink sand! Bermuda was a great port call. There is a lot to do, but it is expensive because it is a tourist hot spot. My most memorable experience there was a ropes course that several cadets signed up for. As part of the "Outward Bound" program, we were taken to an island and offered to go kayaking or do the ropes course. I decided to go on the ropes course, which is basically an obstacle course of balance and coordination 50 feet in the air. It was nerve-racking and fun at the same time. After the ropes course, our guides took us to a cliff jumping spot, where I jumped off a 30-foot cliff. That was scary at first, but awesome in the end.

The next port call was nine days later in St. Pierre. St. Pierre is the last French holding in the western hemisphere. It is a very small French-speaking island with a population of about 6,000 people. There isn't much to do as far as tourism, but it was still my favorite port call. The challenge was to make my own fun, so on the first day, I took off walking. I walked around the city for hours, and then I branched out into the countryside. The island is beautiful. The landscape is rocky and after the city there is a small rocky range that goes on for miles. I hiked for hours. On the last day in St. Pierre, I participated in their Bastille Day celebration, which is much like our 4th of July. The cadets marched from *Eagle* to the ceremony and stood at attention while Captain Pulver saluted various members of the St. Pierre military. After the formal part of the ceremony, I went back on liberty to check out the festivities. There was live entertainment and tons of small booths to check out. In the evening, there was a fireworks show better than an American show I've been to. Then, sadly, I said good-bye to St. Pierre and went back out to sea.

A few days later, we pulled into Halifax, which was really cool. I walked around the city for hours checking out the pier, the local restaurants, parks, museums, and the citadel. The coolest things I saw were all on the waterfront. I went to a nautical museum to look around and ended up staying there for hours. There are so many interesting things to see there; I would recommend it anyone going to Halifax. Since I am 18 and the drinking age is 19, I was not allowed in many of the restaurants after 7 p.m. Again, I had to find my own fun, but I had no problems doing that.

On the home stretch to Boston, I was able to sit back and enjoy the cruise. I had all of my qualifications done, and I ended up getting Damage Control qualified on the second to last day. When we pulled into Boston, I was ready to go home to relax and reminisce about everything I was able to do.

My summer experience will stick with me for the rest of my life. I learned valuable lessons about leadership, team work, and attitude. The most important thing I've learned over my Coast Guard career is that you have to have a good attitude about every opportunity you are offered. That is the only way to make the best of the experience. I have included a couple of pictures from this summer in my gallery to offer a snapshot of some of the things I saw and did.

If you have any questions at all, please feel free to send me an email Hunter.D.Stowes@uscga.edu