

The Journey of Boards (Continued)

Over the course of the next week, I again did not study that much. I focused on my schoolwork until two days before my next exam – just to be clear, you can take one board per week until you end up passing, and the stakes get higher each week you do not pass. By the third time you do not pass, you get placed on restriction and have to take the board with your company's guidon (2/c who is in charge of the 4/c of an individual company). I was getting nervous and really wanted to pass this time to avoid the stress of being possibly placed on restriction. Again, I learned the course of USCG history in about two hours thanks to a shipmate who quizzed me the night of my board.

Then, that fateful night came about. I was signed up to go in the last timeslot, so I was sitting around and waiting in my SDB uniform for an hour before I got to take my board. Over that hour, I remember psyching myself out. Completely. For some reason, in my head, I told myself "Okay, Kirsten. This isn't so big of a deal. What's the worst that could happen? You don't pass this board tonight, okay. You don't pass board the next week, alright. Your class is waiting for you to pass boards so that they can get social media. You never end up passing boards, so your class has to square meals even as 3/c. All through 3/c year you take boards and never pass. You make it up to graduation, still squaring away everything, and everyone underneath you has to square too because nobody is there to give them direction because you didn't pass boards. You are standing up there on graduation day accepting your diploma while still squaring. You will be squaring as an ensign, and they will have no choice but to kick you out of the Guard because who can run a ship while squaring. Nobody will be able to take you seriously. This is the beginning of the end. Right here, right now."

Then they come for me. The person down in the watch office pipes: "The 4/c board indoctrination exam is secured" but that doesn't stop anything. The ruthless freight train that is indoc is coming for me. Fast. And no matter how much I try to deny the sound of that whistle, the rumbling of the very ground under my feet, the train keeps on rollin'. I put my cover (uniform hat) on top of my head and try to cover my eyes because I don't even know what to look at anymore. I go in there, say the mission while being inspected, and then the firstie starts asking me questions. I know the first few, somehow, someway. Then he asks me about a cutter. I went into the exam knowing that I did not know anything about ships or aircrafts, which is pretty much half of the Coast Guard. I ask to skip the question and come back later. Well, it becomes later, we circle back to the question, and he asks me the class of a High Endurance Cutter. I say "W..." (which is the beginning of the identification of the call sign), the firstie feels bad for me and informs me of this. My mind is blank. I am sweating like I just finished a marathon. I have nothing left in my brain. I stand there like an idiot. He is generous and gives me another hint: "His name is on a building on campus." Again, dumb as can be, I respond

“Yeaton.” Bear in mind that this makes absolutely no sense. It’s like being in France and someone asks you what you want to buy (in French of course), and you use the limited amount of knowledge you have of French language and respond whatever the French translation is of “unicorns poop special rainbows on the BBQ.” I had no idea what I was talking about. He takes mercy on me once more; “HE IS ON THE \$10 BILL!” I yell back “LEAMY, ALRIGHT? LET’S MOVE ON!” I realize what I have done and finish “please, sir.”

That’s how my board ended. That was it. I thought there was no way on Earth that I passed. I mentally prepared myself to take the board again next week. And the next week. And until I become an ensign. Later that night, my guidon finds me and tells me that I passed with an 8, right on the nose. I literally fell onto the floor and screamed, at which point an upperclassman walked by me, shook her head, and said under her breath “typical Sharp on a Tuesday night.” I didn’t blame her, and just kept thinking “second time’s the charm.” No matter what rumors you hear about boards, everyone WILL pass them eventually. And it will not take you until you become an ensign to pass.