

United States Coast Guard

Boot Camp Log

Quebec-193

Start Date: 04OCT2016

Grad Date: 23NOV2016

INTRODUCTION 04OCT2026

Adam Mandias

HELLO, AND WELCOME to the Quebec-193 Boot Camp log. This log was written nightly starting on Day 05 and summarizes the events of each day for the Company Commanders. Because my audience consisted of our three Company Commanders, this log is full of inside jokes, references to things that won't make sense to you, and exaggerations to get a laugh. Overall, though, you'll be able to follow most of it fine. At the end of boot camp, I was invited to take home the log as I was primarily responsible for writing it (at least until late October—shoutout to Loren Mano). If you're creative and joining the service, I recommend volunteering for the position as it requires only an hour each night and it gets you out of watch duty (wherein you wake up at a random hour to stand in an empty hallway and record how little happens each hour).

To help you understand the log, I wanted to include a description of some of the “games” mentioned. You'll see references to “eyes in the boat”—a game where you hold something like a canteen out in front of you with your arms straight for 20 minutes and shout, “EYES IN THE BOAT! EYES IN THE BOAT!” Almost every boot camp game is a variant of this (like in discipline reads, where you read a sentence on the definition of discipline). The only exception is “Sniper Position”—a game where you hold a dummy piece (fake rifle) out at an upwards angle, and your hand will shift between uncomfortable and *really* uncomfortable positions. Expect most “beatings” to be a mind-over-matter type endurance exercise.

Our boot camp company also had some challenges that I'd like to spell out for new recruits. We were told by our company commanders at the end of boot camp that our company was

beaten more often than most for reasons outside our control. When we started, our company had something like 90 people in it, which is very small for a company. Papa, the company that reported the week before us, had something like 150 people, which is very large for a company. So early on, we were gifted Papa's weakest ~30 members via reversions, and you can imagine what that did for us. On top of that, if you were reverted out of Papa, it was 5-day reversion to us (Quebec-193 graduated on a Wednesday instead Friday because the next day was Thanksgiving). But anyone being reverted out of Quebec-193 would face a *14-day* reversion (thus redoing 25% of boot camp). This meant it was a very easy decision for Papa's CC's to kick out their weakest members, but a very difficult one for Quebec's to do the same. Our CC's generally opted to continue punishment rather than revert for such a long period of time. So, don't despair! Your time in boot camp likely won't be this bad!

As a note, the log often covers the bad things or the big things, but it leaves out the funny things. The smaller moments. The little jokes. The times the beatings were worth it. Don't get me wrong, boot camp wasn't fun—but it becomes a good memory. My advice to you is to learn your general orders verbatim, volunteer for positions within your company, and to remember that the quickest way out of boot camp is through it. I'll also share with you the greatest advice I received before shipping: The company commanders are not yelling at you, they're telling you exactly what you need to know—just at a high volume. Don't get rattled by the intensity—just listen and act.

All-in-all, the Coast Guard was a fine service. I served for 4.5 years and took my college benefits to go pursue the career I really wanted. I'm thankful for the time I spent serving and am excited to share with you now a day-by-day breakdown of exactly what happens in Coast Guard boot camp.

SUNDAY 09OCT16

Adam Mandias

THE SUN HAD hardly peaked the horizon when the shipmates heard the two words most dreaded—

“WAKE UP!”

Dreary eyed from a night of stressful sleep, the shipmates struggled to rise from their racks and struggled even more to keep up with the company commander. The company commander banged around the room, veins bulging from her neck as she screamed, “WAKE UP, WAKE UP, WAKE UP!”

The shipmates trembled in their boon dockers.

“Grab your GoreTex jackets and PAAANTS!” the company commander screamed with enough vigor to scare a banshee.

The shipmates would have groaned if they could’ve. GoreTex meant the skies were dark and our socks would soak in the settling rainwater.

After a stressful galley run for food, where the comfort of sustenance is combated by the ferocity of every company commander, we celebrated our first divine hours. Divine hours are 05 hours given to recruits every Sunday. Even with assigned homework, the divine hours are simply that: divine. Without the yelling, banging, stomping, whistle-blowing, clipboard-throwing, kill-you-with-a-look company commanders nearby, we are free to assemble our racks in much desired peace.

But even 05 hours, an eternity in boot camp time, goes away and rack inspections were soon to ensue.

“This isn’t folded properly.”

“Trash?! Trash!!”

“Wrong section!”

Upon each correction, the item was strewn across the room, lost in the abyss of shipmate's items. We learned a lesson in that moment: 05 hours leaves the company commanders as refreshed as the recruits.

“Hit the deck!” – this meant push-ups.

Another galley run would soon ensue, where the less disciplined cadets would glance out of the porthole and get caught (and they always get caught).

“What do you see shipmate, huh?!” A company commander was never far away. “Why don’t you shout it for everyone to hear?!”

“I see trees! I see buildings! I see people! I see concrete!” The shipmate would scream as loud as possible, and then, [do it again] “Louder!”

Spirits were low as more punishments were dispersed.

Now, screaming and hollering might be stressful, you might think, but not spirit-crushing...

But you're wrong.

After 03 days of nonstop shouting, hollering, counting aloud from 180 to 0, and abusing our vocal cords, there wasn't anything pleasant left about screaming. Our company commander knew this. She could see it on our faces, hear it in our throats, and understand it in our hearts.

“Compress the racks in the secondary muster!” This meant she was going to teach us something. We didn't know that it was potentially the most important lesson of boot camp.

“Close your eyes,” she said in a moderate tone. “Raise your hand if you're stressed.”

Every hand shot up in the air.

“Raise your hand if you’ve thought at any point: What the frick am I doing here?”

The hands remained still.

We opened our eyes to a moment of understanding.

“You are in this together.” The company commander said. “You are stressed, hurt, and overwhelmed—*together*. If a shipmate needs help, be there for them. Next time, it will be you who needs help, and your shipmate will be there. Remember why you’re here. Everyone misses their families and wife and mom and home, but you all have a purpose for being here. Take a moment to remember that purpose.”

The room was silent, save for the scraping of tears on cheeks.

A moment passed.

“Now who wants to volunteer as company yeoman?” The company commander asked.

Nobody stirred.

With an exasperated sigh, the company commander donned her cover and uttered the other four words recruits dread: “Find some real estate!”

MONDAY 10OCT16

Adam Mandias

“FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!” The company commander stormed into the room, shouting from the top of her lungs and busting about with panic.

We stirred from our beds slowly and shuffled out the back door. To an outsider, we must have looked insane. When someone yells “fire”, you run. But there was no urgency in our feet, nor fear in our eyes, for “fire, fire, fire!” meant something else to us: push-ups, crunches, squats, and flutter kicks.

“If you don’t want to move fast, we play games!” The company commander promised.

And games we played.

“So, you don’t want to move fast in gym class?! Arms out!”

Much like shouting, it will be difficult to explain to the family how “arms out!” was an incredibly taxing task. It sounds so mundane if you’ve never done it before, but fifteen minutes of “arms out!” feels like an eternity to the victim.

“You don’t want to move fast to the ranks and rates class?! Arms out!”

“You don’t want to pack your racks quickly?! Arms out!”

“You don’t want to speak loud and proud? Arms out!”

At the end of the day, four words had been seared in our minds; words that had accompanied every punishment...

“Get louder, move faster!”

TUESDAY 11OCT16

Adam Mandias

DANTE WARNED US that there were nine circles of Hell, each associated with a particular sin: pride, gluttony, anger, etcetera. He only noted nine because he didn't know of the tenth circle, hidden deep inside New Jersey. The inhabitants? Quebec-193. The ruler? Lead company commander YN1 Gilbert. The sins? Moving slowly and speaking quietly.

It was a bad day.

We started with a morning physical fitness regimen that left us tired and sore. In retrospect, that was the easiest part of the day; we only got more tired and sore as time slowly ticked by. Today, the company commanders had a carnival day—and we were the whack-a-moles.

“FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!”

“Find some real estate!”

“Canteens straight out!”

Three-zero minutes at a time, back-to-back-to-back.

The games only ended at taps, and by then, the company commanders had earned themselves the world's largest teddy bears.

WEDNESDAY 12OCT16

Adam Mandias

WHEN WE FIRST arrived at boot camp, we learned the fire escape route. We were told to practice so we can make a swift escape in case of a fire. We thought this drill was called fire, fire, fire because it was meant for fires.

We were wrong.

It's called fire, fire, fire because it leaves our bodies burning; on 'fire, fire, fire!'

In the morning? Wake up! FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!

In the afternoon? The company commanders slipped a note to a shipmate, folded in a square with the note: "Read me." With a gulp, the shipmate revealed the contents of the letter: FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!

In the evening? Every-frickin'-thing was on FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!!

In between today's cataclysmic inferno, however, we had some positive moments. We learned about the Montgomery GI Bill and the Post 9/11 Bill, and how we could use the money for college, or trade school, or even a barber school. It's a useful benefit, and a motivating incentive for us to push another zero-seven weeks.

We received our pieces today and promptly learned how to "FIND SOME REAL ESTATE" with them. We also learned the definition of discipline today after reading it over-and-over again. Though our company commanders tried to teach us the full meaning of it, some of us still struggled with basic instructions. The rules in boot camp are simple: Get loud, go

fast, keep your eyes in the boat, shower, speak properly, know the things in the booklet we've all had for months, no sandbagging, and don't touch your face.

Unfortunately, Quebec does what Quebec wants, and so we continue to get set on FIRE, FIRE, FIRE...

Another important event today was our first day of cycling at the fitness center. The petty officer in charge had us cycle a high intensity interval training cycle. Our itty-bitty legs spun faster, faster, faster until the thin layer of condensation on our skin became massive beads of sweat beneath our bikes. It was a hard, but effective workout.

At night, we had some time to read and write letters, providing some much-needed comfort for some very beaten shipmates.

Lastly, on a very personal and positive note—the galley food was *exceptional* today.

THURSDAY 13OCT16

Adam Mandias

THE MORNING STARTED rough for us. I must admit I'm tired of opening the Historians Log to this statement, but it is our own fault.

Unsurprisingly, we rose before the sun to bask in the warm embers of a "FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!"

And then we missed the time objectives.

And then we left a mess.

And then we were caught whispering.

Frustrated and angry, the company commander marched us to the gym. This was terrifying, but instead of lashing out, the company commander offered hard words instead.

"Only once," she addressed the company, "have I ever told a company that they were the worst company ever! And that was a group of Week 05's that were being idiots. So, believe me, Quebec, when I tell you that you are the Worst. Company. EVER!!!"

The words bit into us. Our ear lowered like puppies who knew we shouldn't have shat on the carpet.

But then, something happened within us. We ascended a step on the ladder—not much, but up.

We were louder-ish. We were faster-ish. We missed time objectives by a little instead of a lot. We touched our face only a little instead of a lot.

These victories lasted through swim class. Today, we did a swim assessment. The cool water was a nice reprieve from the heat of our drills and the facefuls of concrete.

Afterwards, we marched to class to learn about the work-life program. As the instructor discussed our families, our heads sunk over—not from exhaustion, but from nostalgia. The hardest part of boot camp is forgetting about your loved ones, and any mention of them leaves us muddled and sappy.

The chapel housed our next two classes: suicide awareness and stress management. The class was lulled in by Father Brown’s soft, even voice that have never once uttered the words, “FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!”

He shuffled through the stress management slides, assuring us that they didn’t apply to us in boot camp anyways...

It was after this class where we descended our ladder once more, toppling deeper into the abyss of tomfoolery. It was inevitable.

Here’s how Quebec thinks:

If someone calls “mission complete”—that means it’s time to look around. If someone calls “attention on deck”—that means it’s time to search for where the Company Commander is. If it’s time to hold our canteens straight out with no arm bends, we take it to mean it’s time for a break as this will go on for a while. And for sniper position, it’s time to forget our required knowledge.

And so, the games continue, and we can only blame ourselves.

“Thank you, shipmates, thank you.”

Perhaps we should read more of our discipline sheets.

FRIDAY 14OCT16

Adam Mandias

“FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!”

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So now that we got that out of the way, it's time to live another day.

Before we went to the gym today, we took a class on dental indoc. While a class with this name seems terrifying (dental? indoctrination? Yuck!), the class wasn't all that bad. We learned proper dental hygiene, which is useful for a group that “does not shower and does not clean”. The bottom line, though, is that we're all happy to be receiving dental care.

Later on, we went to the gym and swam laps. As always, the low impact of movement and the cool submersion were relieving to our aching joints.

Our company commander gave us a lenient 15-minute break to shower and get ready, to which we all succeeded except for one person.

As is tradition, we *all* paid the price.

And that is today's theme. You'll see.

After gym, we met with our company mentor and asked as many questions as possible. Every minute with somebody that has answers is precious, and we learned a lot from him.

Next, in the same room, company commander petty officer Gilbert led a class on alert levels, counterterrorism, bomb threats, and watch standing.

As the warmth enveloped our bodies and exhaustion cradled us, our eyelids started to fall. We all fought against it and succeeded

Except one of us.

We all paid the price.

Our afternoon galley run was the real turning point of the day. We were the first to arrive, and it seemed remarkably peaceful...

And then a swarm of company commanders descended from their hive, sensing the comfortable prey and striking while we were weakest. Chaos broke out in the ranks as some struggled to remember the training duty officer of the day.

We all paid for their mistakes.

It was halfway through this punishment when we were handed over to company commander petty officer Lora. Our day only got worse starting with the “Laundry Olympics”: a cute name for a stressful cardio struggle. After stashing our bags as far from the squad bay as possible, we ran back and forth, moving our clothes one piece at a time across the room.

We were too slow.

We paid the price.

Canteens out, 30 minutes, go faster.

Many of us succeeded in keeping our arms straight. Some of us did not. Naturally, Petty Office Lora came to the only reasonable conclusion: “We need to learn discipline!”

We flinched at the mention of the word and then retreated for our discipline papers. We held those out for another 30 minutes. Occasionally, an eye would shift and time would extend. An arm would bend and eternity added a minute.

“Put your arms down,” the company commander said over a wave of relieving grunts, “and be quick because there’s a fire, fire, fire!”

Our heads lowered and we retrieved our pieces. We almost made it, too—

Except. For. One. Shipmate.

“Find some real estate!” The company commander ordered, before tearing our thighs apart.

Someone looked at our company commander. We paid the price, this time with sniper.

This game, however, was cut “short” after 30 minutes due to an unexpected “fire”.

And during this fire, the secondary squad bay forgot to close the hatch.

We all paid the price.

Then we went upstairs for a friendly “eyes-in-the-boat” session.

At the conclusion of the day, our backs were shredded, our shoulders wrecked, our arms ripped apart, and our minds mangled.

Quebec-193 is starting to come together, but we aren’t on the same page yet. And so, for each mistake an individual makes, we all pay the price.

Hopefully, with all the prices we’ve paid, our company commanders can buy themselves something nice.

SATURDAY 15OCT16
(WEEK 02 IN REVIEW)
Adam Mandias

(Note: All week-in-reviews were posted online for friends and family to read)

PEOPLE GROW STRONGER by pushing their limits. Body builders have known this for years. You must push yourself, strain your body, and physically tear your muscles apart before you can grow any muscle at all. This process is neither painless nor comfortable, but it is altogether necessary if you wish to become stronger.

And the Coast Guard wants strong members. The Coast Guard *needs* strong members: physically, emotionally, and mentally. Thus, in order to grow strong for the Coast Guard, we must follow the same formula that body builders follow: push until you no longer can, and then push some more, and let the muscle fill in the tears later.

This week, we started the process: we pushed. It's for our own good, of course, but again, it is not painless and it is certainly not comfortable.

Between our classes (more on those later), we were the favored attraction at the Company Commander Carnival. Here at the Carnival, we get to play their games. One such popular game is called "FIRE FIRE FIRE!". It's usually the first thing we hear in the morning along with loud whistles, banging doors, and lots of yelling. To be honest with you, it's not as nice as the typical alarm clock—and there's no hitting snooze.

During "FIRE FIRE FIRE!" we run out of the escape hatch, emulating a fire escape, and line up outside for quality fitness training. We work until our bodies are on "FIRE FIRE FIRE!"

Another popular game here at the Carnival is called “CANTEENS OUT!” a game where we hold our full canteens in front of our body for 20 – 30 minutes at a time. While this game certainly hurts, it is more of a mental challenge. Every minute of canteens out incites a war between the mind and body. Every additional second feels impossible, but as long as our minds don’t give up, we persevere.

There are many games at the Company Commander Carnival: reading about discipline, canteen holds, sniper position, the sea bag shuffle, and so many more...too many to list.

But the games are not issued without purpose. One of the first things we were told here was that we will pay for everyone’s mistakes, and there will be mistakes. If someone looks around, “CANTEENS OUT!” If someone is moving too slowly, “FIRE FIRE FIRE!” The group punishment for individual mistakes ushers in unparalleled senses of personal responsibility. The effect this has had on the company has been astounding.

When we started the week, we were new to everything. We were quiet, lost, and confused. Watching the other companies was daunting. Could we really sound like that? Could we really behave as well as them? Our minds had doubt. But over the week, we’ve shown signs of growth. Some of our muscles, like vocal cords, have already grown stronger, and with this, we are starting to find our voices as a company. Other muscles—like those built around uncompromising discipline or personal responsibility in regard to gear stowage—are taking more time.

In summary, this week was rough. Our Company Commanders are loud, in our faces, uncompromising in their standards, and unyielding with their punishments. This week, we experienced the first step in coming together as a team and growing as individuals. To add to our stressors we all miss our

family. But, we have already persevered through this week, and we will continue to persevere. Cape May might not be glitzy like Las Vegas, or luscious like Miami, but it has ‘Amber waves of grain’ so to speak.

And that’s enough for us.

SUNDAY 16OCT16

Adam Mandias

OUR EYES FLICKERED open at the first stirring of the boondockers in the hallway. Quickly, we let go of our evening dreams and woke back into our real world.

Our movements have become automatic by now, and we shuffled for our shoes. There was a spark of hope in our eyes—an inkling of excitement in our hearts as we anticipated our second divine hours.

In the quiet serenity of the hours, we forgot where we were. Out came the mistakes: hands on faces, unsecured racks, failure to sound off, walking on the quarterdeck... The interactions piled together, totaling to an astounding debt that would soon be paid.

But before then, our company commander went over some business. People were fired from jobs and others stepped up. Records of counseling were issued, and drill team members were chosen.

Before Petty Officer Gilbert turned us over to the other two Company Commanders, she left us with some promises: recruit attitude motivation program (RAMP) was coming, probation was coming, and her favorite game was going to be played—tomorrow.

We took a collective gulp as dread crept through our minds. What could her favorite game be?

“They’re all yours,” Petty Officer Gilbert said, passing us off to Petty Officer Turner and Petty Officer Lora with a thorough list of misdeeds we had committed.

They wasted no time in collecting their debts—all of them, infraction by infraction. We had been so sloppy all day that none

of our company commanders even wanted to march us to the galley.

Any relaxation we had gathered during divine hours was stripped from us as we moved from punishment to punishment in a never-ending river of sweat.

We played everything today: Fire, Fire, Fire, Canteens Out, Canteen Bends, Discipline Reads, Sitting Sniper Position, Standing Sniper Position, the Changing Game, and every variation of Canteen Games, from eyes in the boat, to get louder, to go faster.

It's on days like these when we wonder: how strong are our company commander's noses? How can they bear the stench of 90 recruits as they sweat and cry in their days-old uniforms? Either they can't smell, or they deserve medals for exposure to noxious fumes on a daily basis.

The days grow longer as more mistakes are made. Our muscles and minds continue to tear, but still, we persevere in hopes to grow stronger as a company.

MONDAY 17OCT16

Adam Mandias

PETTY OFFICER LORA lit the fire across the squad bays this morning. As usual, our bodies rolled slowly from our racks and our feet went pitter-patter across the deck. A thin haze of grogginess obscured our vision, doubly so for those who had watch the night prior.

Needless to say, our company commander was not pleased with our speed. It didn't take long before our Coast Guard manuals were removed from our rucksacks and we read about discipline.

Our first order of business today was the survival float. This task consisted of donning special suits and lazing about. Finally, a task Quebec-193 couldn't mess up.

We left the gym an hour later and "marched" over to the galley. We are still not proud enough to march together, so instead, we filed.

After the galley run, we went straight back to the gym for a cycling class. Within thirty minutes of high intensity interval training, enough sweat had amassed on the deck to warrant its own Coast Guard patrol. It was a lot of sweat.

After the gym run, we filed back to the squad bays to learn a new lesson from Petty Officer Gilbert.

"Squad Bay leaders, grab the mattress from your rack," she ordered. She'd come in on her day off just for this. "The rest of you, sit and watch."

What followed was brutal. The Squad Bay leaders were put through intensive training, including a mattress lift, up down outs with Model 1 Garands, front sweeps with Model 1 Garands, push-ups, and heavy rope shoulder lifts.

The rest of us watched, feeling empathy pull on our heartstrings. Left in the silence to think about our actions, we all felt ashamed and horrible—save for 04 recruits who only felt tired.

“Congratulations,” Petty Officer Gilbert said, “you’ve earned records of counseling.”

Individual punishments were dispersed, including our company’s first (but not last) red belt.

A fire was lit. Motivation pumped through our bodies. Whether from empathy or fear, things started to work better. The stragglers were running, the whisperers were shouting, and our speech protocol was markedly improved.

This lasted through the evening to our two classes. The first class was another lesson on sexual assault. The big point stressed here was to avoid alcohol.

The second class was on Coast Guard missions and roles. We learned about the multitude of jobs every member of the Coast Guard holds.

Overall, today was a roller coaster. Not the one that goes round and round, but the one with ups and downs. We can only hope the entire company can push to 110% from here on out.

TUESDAY 18OCT16

Adam Mandias

IT WAS A rough start in the morning. We left trash in the head, gear was adrift, faces weren't shaven, feet weren't moving, voices weren't booming...

But this time, *we* didn't pay. Only the squad leaders paid. It was still early in the morning when Petty Officer Gilbert lost her patience with us. The squad leaders promptly retrieved their mattresses and were immediately crucified with them. The rest of us watched uncomfortably, squirming on the inside, our guts bubbling with guilt.

We did this. We did this to *them*.

For most of us, the clock ticked slowly. For the squad leaders, the clock hardly ticked at all. But they proved something in their victory—they proved they were the strongest of us.

At the conclusion of our punishment, we were instructed to clean the squad bays, and something strange happened to Quebec-193: we listened. As the squad leaders issued objectives, we followed. As they strategized a plan, we acted.

During this time, some of us split from the company to get official military identifications. It feels surreal to hold in your hand and helped usher in newfound motivation. This was real. We were here to serve our country.

Other motivational items were handed out today as well, specifically records of counseling. Dirty racks, dirty faces, no motivation—these problems corrupted our company. Hopefully no longer.

On a positive note, we had our first seamanship class today. The instructor, Petty Officer Broocks, taught us about nautical terms. His voice was easy and his teaching style laid back. He still

expected us to adhere to military customs and courtesies, but he was less strict with his tone and even popped the occasional joke. We all look forward to learning from him over the coming weeks and are excited to learn about practical, boat-related skills.

This week has seen more stragglers than ever before as more and more of our shipmates are assigned duties. Mistakes continue to be made as we traverse the plains of Cape May, never far from the company commanders who lie in the shadows of the ladder wells, waiting for weak prey while salivating over blank trackers and dying to stain them with ink...

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But the chaplain came today. His words were light and his spirit uplifting. He told jokes, gave sports updates, discussed politics, and updated us on the outside world. Most importantly, he reminded us why we were here: to become ready to serve in an organization that saves lives. Things are difficult because our mission isn't just vital; it's a mission that means life and death to those who've been saved by the guardsmen who came before us. It's a mission that means life and death to those who we will save in the future.

We finished the evening by getting smoked by Petty Officer Turner, and settled in our beds, mentally preparing for a long night of standing watch.

WEDNESDAY 19OCT16

Adam Mandias

TODAY STARTED MUCH like every other day: with a list of transgressions plastered on the wall. Literally—a brown sheet of paper was taped to the wall and filled to the edges with sharpie marks.

We paid for each transgression with sweat as a team.

As more shipmates received their military identification cards, the rest of us were instructed to clean the squad bays. Under the lead of the squad leaders, we shouted our first “Mission Complete” for the day.

Success was followed by success, which was followed by failure, which was followed by success.

“You’re getting better!” Petty Officer Gilvery shouted, “but you’re not there yet. Now, I’m going to do you a favor and let you run the track! Don’t think it makes us buddies!”

We scrambled for our fitness gear and had to do it twice because the first time, we failed the time objective. Then, we made our way to the track.

Throughout the day, we tried different marching commanders. So far, the position has only been held by volunteers, and their mistakes were numerous: commands on the wrong foot, forgetting directions, not sounding off, lack of cadence, not being centered on the company, and more, and more, and more...

Somehow (with Company Commander assistance), we made it to our seamanship class to learn about knots and lines. While the content was dry (who’s really dying to know the nomenclature of line sizes?), the information was useful for our future time in the fleet.

Afterwards, back at Healy Hall, we gathered our belongings and shifted racks. It was at this exact moment that our synergy fizzled away. Things were uncomfortable again. Room leaders had to be re-identified. The progress Quebec made had vanished and time objectives were being missed by a mile.

All at once, the carnival lights flickered back on, illuminating our frightened, pained faces with loud, angry glow. And, standing at the front of the queue line, ready to play, was Petty Officer Turner.

Amongst the standard favorites was a new game—a variation of sniper position. As the company stood at Sniper Position, one shipmate ran down the center aisle, pulling a rope to the end, and running it back. Since he was being punished for smiling, he had to shout: “Boot Camp’s not funny!” and “Hahahahaha!” over and over.

As the carnival lights were extinguished, we dragged our tender broken bodies into our bed and prayed for heavy sleep.

THURSDAY 20OCT16

Adam Mandias

THE WIND STIRRED quietly, rustling the leaves of the trees and flowing freely, undisturbed by the day's events—it was *that* early in the morning that we were led to the track for morning physical training. With a heavy crank, the lights snapped alive, lighting a small section of the track.

“Half of you run this way,” the Company Commander said, “do twenty push-ups and ten pull ups. Then sprint to the other side and do it again. You other half—start over there!” She pointed to a set of bars across the track.

After our work-out, we tried out some new shipmate commanders for marching our company formation. After a few stumbles, we settled on a shipmate who showed the potential to learn. We all hold our breath in hopes that he can stay loud, stay on step, and stay vigilant in the plaza.

We took our rucksacks to chow with us as we were going to spend the whole day at seamanship class. Today's class was on helmsmanship and lookout. It feels extremely good to receive training on things that will be useful in the fleet. We were worried that our only acquired ability from boot camp was going to be canteen holds. But no—our fates would be different under the expert instruction of Petty Officer Brooks.

At the end of class, we had rucksack inspections. Not a single soul escaped without some note attached to their rucksack. Even worse, this was the end of the line for one of our, let's say, 'less disciplined' shipmates. He was caught with unauthorized notes and refused to read them aloud. As it turned out, our company commander had already read the notes because the shipmate left his rack unsecured. That's strikes one,

two, and three all at once. Two minutes was all it took for someone's day to go from decent to worst-day-ever.

After the rucksack inspection, we were guided back to the squad bay to drop off our bags. Words cannot describe the mess we walked in to.

But I'll try.

A hurricane of paper shreds had been torn across the squad bays. The racks had been trampled by a dozen bulls, pushed out of place with their accompanying mattresses strewn about haphazardly. Tape was lined around the room, covering it like a crime scene for a homicide. A sea monster's worth of sticky, wet toilet paper clung to the bathroom walls and drooped down the walls like a pack of snails having a nasty race.

The place was FILTHY.

Cleaning this mess was how we spent the rest of the evening, evacuating only for the occasional "fire".

FRIDAY 21OCT16

Adam Mandias

IN THE CIVILIAN world, there's a saying—where there's smoke, there's fire. In boot camp, there's a similar saying—where there's Fire, Fire, Fire, someone getting smoked.

This is where our morning starts—and ends. From the first moment of sunlight, until afternoon chow, we got smoked. This is due to Quebec's continued lack of discipline. We seem to have good days and bad days now—today was a bad day, mostly. It seemed as if nobody could look straight or stand still, and so we spent all morning refreshing our minds on all of our games.

Our ranks are growing larger as more people are reverted or rephrased into our company. This is making us very nervous. Could we be next?

We spent the first half of the afternoon cleaning the squad bays. Respect for the squad leaders continues to grow as they guide us to success in meeting time objectives. It's clear as time goes on that our squad leaders were rightfully chosen.

The second half of the afternoon was spent in seamanship class. We took our official tests in helmsmanship and knot tying. Our instructor continues to remind us to practice, as we are now responsible for the material.

After class, we resumed the cleaning of the squad bays, wiping down every surface, scrubbing every rack, and swabbing every deck. After being forced to live in filth for all of last week, we are thankful for every opportunity to clean and organize.

From here, we went to the galley again, and from the galley, the company split a little. A small group went to choir, and a larger majority dressed for a workout.

Those that went to choir missed out on an excellent class on physical fitness instruction. Led by our company commander, and not by Petty Officer Vucetich, we did several lifting exercises to build our strength and then did a bicycle ride for 200 calories. Afterwards, we were instructed to do pull-ups and push-ups. We are taking this time very seriously as the pressure of our physical fitness exam lingers around the corner.

We finished the evening with a taste of what's called the evening routine. The evening routine is a much-desired block of time that allows us to square away our racks, clean the squad bays, shower, mail, and pray/have some private time. We were told that the evening routine would start next week, but only if we earn it day-by-day. Hopefully, this sparks some extra motivation into us.

Today felt important for us, but in little ways. People are growing more comfortable with the routine and are understanding more about how boot camp works. The stronger members of the company are stepping forward, and the weaker members are being weeded out. Still, though, we need to go faster and get LOUDER!!!

SATURDAY 22OCT16
(WEEK 03 IN REVIEW)
Adam Mandias

THIS WEEK WAS a transitioning one for Quebec-193. We saw a lot of failure, but also a little success. Things are becoming more routine for us, and this week we shouted “Mission Complete” more often than not.

As part of the transition, we have started our training in seamanship. From manning a helm to knot tying, we learned practical skills that will be useful for our time in the fleet.

The stress of boot camp has started to ramp up as standards become stricter. Our responsibilities have been stacked upon us this week, pushing us to new milestones. Squad leaders have stepped forward in their positions in the squad bays, simultaneously guiding us to victory, and (literally) bearing the weight of our failures.

One of the most challenging aspects of the week has been watch-standing. Watch-standing happens every night in one-hour blocks. Throughout the night, we are woken up early and must report to a specific location. From there, we march through squad bays and report violations of orders. As you might imagine, the interrupted sleep leaves us like zombies the next day.

This is dangerous because the list of severe individual punishments grew in size this week. There are probation belts for people with deficiencies such as bearing or knowing their required knowledge. A program known as RAMP opened up for recruits with discipline or attitude problems. This program is extremely physical—every recruit from our company that went

this week ended up in the medical bay after their very first day of RAMP.

This program is very intense, but it's not the worst punishment; that honor belongs to reversions. Being reverted means you are reassigned to the next company. It is what we all fear most—and for some of our shipmates, this nightmare became a reality this week. But to earn a reversion, you must violate one of the three Coast Guard Core Values: Honor, Respect, Devotion to Duty. For most of us, this won't be a problem.

The challenges of boot camp, combined with the looming threat of punishment have ushered in a refined sense of personal responsibility. In many instances, our Company Commanders have stepped back from their hand holding, putting the burden on us to know what is going on, when it will happen, and how to prepare for it. From laundry duty to drill practice to ceremonial band to personal dental appointments, we are responsible to stay vigilant throughout the day and take charge of our lives.

In short, we are growing up.

We are growing stronger, mentally and physically. The things that seemed impossible last week are within our grasp this week. On the first day of boot camp, it was promised that boot camp would not be easy. That promise has been upheld. It was also promised that boot camp would make us better people. It's still early in our cycle, but it's easy to see that this promise will be upheld as well.

Though it is difficult to hear from us often, know that we are doing things that would make you, our loved ones, very proud. We will continue to fail as a company—but it is only so we may succeed later. You will always be our first family, but

soon, we will be a part of a second family: the United States Coast Guard. First, however, we must earn it!

SUNDAY 23OCT16

Adam Mandias

TODAY STARTED WITH divine hours, as every Sunday does. When the clock struck 0800, we all shared a collective sigh and collapsed on the deck with a small breath.

We had an assignment today, simple homework to tell a story—our story. Why are we here? What was it in our life that led us to the Coast Guard?

We shared our stories and histories, discussing our patriotism, family, and the values that we share with the organization. Then Petty Officer Gilbert shared her story—why was she here?

“As a Yeoman,” she began, talking in such a way to cut through to our hearts as only she could, “I could be working the eight to two life, spending evenings and weekends with my family. It’d be nice—easy even. But that’s not what I care about. I care about the Coast Guard. I care about the eighteen-year-old kids who stood on the yellow triangles three weeks ago who will—in five short weeks—start pulling dead bodies from the water before screaming wives and newborn children. People die in a second—one. second. They’re alive, and the next second they aren’t. If you can’t move fast now, you won’t move fast in the fleet. And when you don’t move fast in the fleet, people die.

“If you’re going to save a life,” she continued, “you’re going to earn it, right here, right now, and every day—you’re going to give me 110 percent, or you will not graduate with your company, and you will not go on to save lives.”

She let her words linger one single second before having us change into fitness gear. That second was filled with many emotions. The realness of our situation was settling in.

Once in our fitness gear, we high-tailed it to the track for a mile-and-a-half run. Once again, Petty Officer Gilbert reminded us that if we all pass our physical fitness test, we can get coffee in the galley. While this is a VERY strong incentive, our odds appear slim as some of our shipmates are well behind the minimum standard.

For the first time ever, we double-timed back to the squad bay, chanting a simple Jodie as we went. With our hearts, minds, and bodies on the same page, this was a special moment.

And then, in the afternoon and evening, we ruined it. Sandbaggers, talkers, face-touchers, and eye-shifters caused an evening of pain.

Pirates have a saying: The beatings will continue until morale improves. This, we assume, is also Petty Officer Lora's motto.

MONDAY 24OCT16

Adam Mandias

OUR FIRST ORDER of business today—after the usual morning muster and galley run—was a seamanship class. This class was on extinguishing flames. Perhaps now we can prevent the squad bay from catching fire each morning... (we can only hope...)

While the subject matter seems like it would be interesting (who isn't excited by fire-fighting?), the class happened to be a little dry. Today was not a hands-on lesson; today was a textbook lesson.

Despite that, we all know it's important to understand what we are working with when the subject matter is a deadly force of nature. On the other hand, we are all excited for the practical portion of the class.

As we marched from location to location, we tried another new commander for marching the company. Gaining new commanders will allow us to split the company to tackle more tasks.

The rest of the afternoon was spent on reminders.

The first thing we were reminded of was that military life is a good life. The class that reminded us of that was the housing class. The military takes care of all housing issues, from rent to utilities. This is a huge relief for anyone who has ever had to pay those bills.

The second thing we were reminded of was that, after boot camp, we will have options again. This class was on enlisted careers. We discussed all the different rates, how many people were in those rates, how many of those were afloat or ashore, and a small bit on how promotions work. With this information,

a big decision rests on our shoulders: how will we proceed with our careers after boot camp? What A School will we attend?

Our last reminder was that boot camp ends. This reminder came to us in the form of pictures for graduation. It's easy to forget that boot camp ends when the days are so long and our countdown calendars are several dozen days long. But, as always, time continues to flow, like an unstoppable river, and we will continue to flounder in its current.

In the evening, several probation belts were issued to struggling shipmates and a new slew of recruits were assigned to RAMP.

The night concluded with a traditional beatdown from Petty Officer Lora. After some sniper position and discipline reads, we called it a night and tucked under the sheets of our imperfect racks. Our minds are filled with hope and doubts as we look ahead on the schedule to our fitness test and knowledge test.

Things are about to get really real...

TUESDAY 25OCT16

Adam Mandias

AS THE WEEKS move forward, our list of offenses grow smaller—but our infractions are the same problems we had in week 02; namely, we aren't being loud and we aren't moving fast enough.

After a brief beating and a galley run, we had a firefighting class. While it was still a cool class, and it was neat to use a fire extinguisher for the first time, the class had one major disappointment—there was no real fire. Instead, we aimed our extinguisher at a wall of lights that dimly glowed in the pattern of a fire. So, while informative and neat, there was certain lack of adrenaline (not that we aren't pumping adrenaline all day around Cape May).

After seamanship class, we shuffled to the galley as a gaggle. We did this to show the whole of Boot Camp that we were undeserving to be here.

At the galley, we expected the normal galley assault with required knowledge questions and a typical tracker for missed shaving or ruffled sleeves, but what we got was, for some people, so much worse.

“Squad Leaders!” Petty Officer Gilbert called out.

The squad leaders stood.

“Who is the weakest link? Who would you nominate for RAMP?”

The squad leaders shuffled around uncomfortable for a few moments, sweating in the spotlight, unwanting to turn in a shipmate. The rest of us sat by, nervously fighting the urge to bite our fingernails.

Finally, a few names were called, and the list narrowed to two people. These two people reported to RAMP shortly thereafter, ready (or not) to spend the next few days destroying their bodies.

We moved onwards to colors class to learn about the proper way to raise and strike colors. A few members of our company were chosen to work colors in the coming weeks. In the meantime, they will shadow the senior companies to learn their way around the flag mast.

After colors class, we moved on to the gym for a bike workout. Petty Officer Vucetich likes to remind us that the pain we feel is all mental—much like the rest of boot camp.

Furthermore, we've noticed that the company commanders are like mob bosses—they always collect their debts. So, we paid for them with a little pain and discomfort and moved on to a meeting with the chaplain.

As always, the time with him was relaxing and informative. It was nice to know that very little is going wrong in the outside world.

We tucked in tonight intent on getting good sleep; tomorrow will be our fitness assessment.

It's time to push deep.

WEDNESDAY 26OCT16

Adam Mandias

THE MORNING STARTED light today with an order to meet up on main muster instead of the usual Fire, Fire, Fire drill. We were *EXTREMELY* grateful for this because of one thing in our minds—the physical fitness test. The whispers around the squad bay indicated that we were all nervous for the assessment—even those who passed the first time. By now, our bodies had become so shredded that nobody was sure how much their body was still capable of.

But the assessment would be an afternoon activity, and before then, we would have to tackle the fire-fighting practical exam.

As noted earlier, the fire-fighting practical test doesn't involve a real fire. Instead, we spray at a screen projecting the image of a fire. This seemed to be a simple task until things got real.

“Fire, Fire, Fire!” our instructor shouted. Half the squad flinched, anticipating intensive training. The other half rushed down the hall, donned heavy equipment, and pushed into a dark, smoky room. Inside, the screens illuminated the smoke and an eerie glow filled the room. Claustrophobia hit hard. The effect was exacerbated by the strain of constant squatting. Overall, this test was much more stressful than anticipated. Despite this, it was an overwhelming success. Every member of our company passed with flying colors.

The same cannot be said of the physical fitness assessment. Petty Officer Gilbert told us that, “If there is any time to give 110 percent, it's now.” While some of us mustered up, ready to march into battle, some of us couldn't dig deep enough to find

the strength to carry on. Luckily, instead of reversion, they have been sent to remedial fitness training. We'll see how lucky this fate ends up being.

After the fitness assessment, we had a short meeting with our company mentor. As per last time, he brought over a couple guests—a former company commander and a recent graduate from Kilo. Together, they answered questions ranging from life after boot camp to advice for our picks, which will happen tomorrow.

After the fitness test, the temporary physical reprieve ended, and we resumed our regularly scheduled programming of games and beatings.

As we tuck in for the night, our mind is filled with heavy thoughts—what will we pick tomorrow on our dream sheets? Where will we be living next month?

It's time to become adults and make some tough choices.

THURSDAY 27OCT16

Adam Mandias

WE WOKE UP with a prickly feeling in the back of our minds. Today, we would make hard decisions. There would be no advice or input from family, friends, wives, girlfriends, husbands, boyfriends, parents, or pets—this decision was ours and ours alone.

It was time to fill out our dream sheets.

Before we could request our futures, however, we would have a few classes.

The first class was on commitment. We were reminded of our commitment to the Coast Guard and taught about role model Coasties to look up to. The class helped settle us a little as we remembered to put the needs of Coast Guard before our own. Even so, there was still a nervous shuffle—was it possible the Coast Guard needs would be the same as ours?

From the commitment class, we went directly to the cyber awareness and security class. This class was largely computer based, which would have been fine if the computers weren't so buggy and slow.

The cyber security training program... it tried. It tried to be fun. It tried to be engaging. But there's only so much you can do with the content at hand. For once, it was a good thing to be deprived of entertainment, because it made this task slightly more enjoyable.

And then came the big moment—the moment of truth. The dream sheets.

The papers were very straight-forward. Write your name, your districts, and then beg. Beg for your life.

The Yeoman guiding us asked if anyone wanted a pre-read of their sheets, and half the class raised their hand—a clear indicator of our anxiety. One hour later, our sheets were collected, and our fates were no longer ours to control. It'll take a week before we learn of our assignments. Until then—we wait and we work.

While all of this was going on, our section commander popped by the squad bay to perform a surprise inspection.

We failed.

As such, instead of studying for our midterm, we got a beating. It seems as though the beatings will never end. They take the place of manual of arms training, they take the place of evening routine, and they take the place of almost any non-required block of time.

Tonight, we'll tuck ourselves in, nurse our muscles, and hope.

FRIDAY 28OCT16

Loren Mano

IT SEEMS AS though Quebec-193 keeps taking one step forward and two steps back. We are constantly reminded by our sore muscles and hoarse throats from a plethora of intensive training sessions that we “Just aren’t getting it.” We have been repeatedly told that we act like a Week 02 company and, to be honest, our actions lately do not show a lot of growth. Our uniforms were not up to the standards of what they should be. Adding to this that the males of Quebec had their heads shaven again today, we really did LOOK like a week 02 company. We desperately want to prove ourselves to our company commanders, but we consistently seem to fall short.

We started this morning on the wrong foot. Not only were we not loud or fast enough, a shipmate incorrectly put on her green jacket, placing her hood on the inside. This prompted Petty Officer Gilbert to have some fun with said recruit. While marching back, our shipmate, now Seaman Recruit Michael-Angelo, marched in the back of the formation screaming, “TURTLE POWER!” all the way back to Healy Hall as if she were a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle. Some of our shipmate tried to stifle their laughs by coughing into their arms, but Petty Officer Gilbert was well aware of what we were really doing. Such discrepancies are added to a list at the end of the day which we have to pay with sweat for.

Later in the day, we all took our midterm. We were pretty nervous going into it. We did not have a lot of time to study as we spent the previous night building our muscles and not our minds.

Although many of us went into the test with anxiety and fear of not passing and being reverted, most of us came out with our

heads held high, scoring well into the 90's. Maybe we're a company who is just book smart and not street smart. Judging by today's scores, we obviously understand the material. We just can't seem to wrap our heads around just about everything else.

Today, Quebec-193 became stronger, but not in the way we wanted to. Our muscles are sore from all the beatings our company commanders gave us, and it is likely we will still be feeling just as horrible tomorrow. Hopefully, we will learn from our mistakes of today and start fresh tomorrow.

SATURDAY 29OCT16

Adam Mandias

IN THE EARLIEST hours of the morning, Petty Officer Gilbert arrived at her office. We were all sound asleep, giving Petty Officer Gilbert had a moment to reflect. With a heavy sigh, she lay her company commander cap aside and collapsed behind her desk. Her mind was already weary from contemplating how to revert all hundred of us.

Suddenly, there was an idea. Petty Officer Gilbert cleared her desk and scrambled for parchment. Her inkstick moved quickly, outlining her plan:

“Smoke ‘em.”

And that’s what she did. It was almost as if we had an intensive training test today—a test to go along with the midterm and physical tests.

We were tested on everything: canteen holds, canteen bends, piece intensive training, regular intensive training, the sea bag shuffle, sniper position—every game in the carnival.

In between clothes changing drills and fire, fire, fire, we had a brief reprieve at Sexton Hall to learn about being on watch there next week.

Walking back through those doors was a harrowing experience as the memories of pre-forming week came flooding back. Even after all this time, Sexton Hall is still a scary, uncomfortable place to be.

We finished the night with additional intensive training and tucked in with the promise of divine hours hanging in our minds.

WEEK 04 IN REVIEW

Loren Mano

WHAT AN EVENTFUL week it's been for Quebec-193! We faced three daunting challenges and were able to overcome them all. This week we had our second physical fitness test, firefighting test and midterm examination.

Many of us were nervous going into our physical fitness test. Our bodies have been sore for weeks and we were worried we would be too weak to pass. With some encouragement from the staff and the promise of being allowed coffee in the morning if we all passed, Quebec-193 took off! During our sit ups, pushups and run all of us were red faced and sweating profusely. We gave it 100% and then some. A lot of us even got better scores than our first test but unfortunately not all of Quebec-193 passed. Our dreams of coffee now diminished. Our motivation has not faltered though; most of our shipmates re-took the test and passed!

Later this week we had our firefighting test. This was probably the most fun, thrilling and terrifying test we have done so far. Once told "Fire fire fire!" Quebec-193 sprinted to action. Donning our yellow suits, masks, and oxygen tanks we raced into a smoke-filled room to put out our fire. What a chaotic mess we were in the beginning! Our suits weighed heavily on us, forcing us to fall over many times while the smoke heavily impaired our vision. Gradually though, we were able to adjust to the situation and accomplish our mission.

Lastly, we all took our midterm examination. Parents and loved ones should have another reason to be proud of this company. Our company average was 91%! This definitely took most of us by surprise. Maybe Quebec-193 is just book smart and not street smart; we obviously understand the material, but

day to day routine is still a bit hard for us. Nevertheless, these scores definitely were boosts to our morale which will hopefully stay with us next week.

Or perhaps we're being hard on ourselves (not that this is a bad thing) the days are long and progress is gradual, so it's been difficult to see the growth in the midst of our struggles, but we do finally have someone to measure ourselves against: new companies on the regiment. That's right... Quebec-193 are no longer the new kids on the block. We're a little more seasoned, a little faster, and a little louder. As we look up to the senior companies, we are sure there is progress to be made. But we look down to the newer companies, we can remember how scared we were, how quiet we were, how confused we were and take solace that we are improving as a company and as individuals.

As we move into the following week, we now have an important duty to be the best we can to inspire the new recruits as role models moving to the second half of training, and as children moving into adulthood.

SUNDAY 30OCT16

Loren Mano

ZERO STEPS FORWARD, twenty steps backward. What a horrendous day Quebec-193 had. Many of us look forward to Sundays as it is a day where we get to square away our rooms and uniforms in a relaxed environment.

Nothing was relaxing today.

Right off the bat, just as we were settling into our routine, we heard the ringing bell of the fire alarm. It took us all by surprise, and for a few seconds, we looked around at one another confused, not knowing if this was a drill or not. We then rushed outside and grouped together, not knowing whether or not we would be expecting thick plumes of smoke billowing out from a window. When the situation was secured, low and behold, it was discovered the alarm had been set off by a recruit from Quebec. Our stomachs dropped. We inwardly (and even some of us outwardly) groaned. “Not us. Not us AGAIN!” we thought to ourselves.

Amidst the confusion, some of us lost our military bearing: our eyes were not in the boat, we were talking, and we were moving around in formation. This was much to the displeasure of our assistant company commander YN2 Lora, who made sure to remind us that we would pay for these discrepancies.

And pay for them we did.

What we did next was not a result of today’s actions. It was a result of our actions for the past 04 weeks. Our lead company commander, YN1 Gilbert, has constantly stressed that we need to be faster, we need to be louder. These simple rules always seem to fall on deaf ears. No amount of sweat sessions, motivational speeches, or practice seem to have any effect on

Quebec-193, so our company commanders decided to take away our pride.

We were thoroughly embarrassed today. Our uniforms were changed to reflect what we really are: a complete, and utter mess. Our hats flipped backwards, our blouses disheveled. We hung our heads low and sat outside while other recruits, those who deserved to wear the uniform, trained on. Unfortunately, not all of us took this lesson seriously, and the company paid for their mistakes.

As much as we were embarrassed by our actions, it fails in comparison to the level of Petty Officer Gilbert. We consistently let her, and the other company commanders down.

Tomorrow's a new day. Quebec-193 needs to get our act together. We cannot continue on as we are now.

MONDAY 31OCT16

Adam Mandias

THERE WAS NO fire this morning, but nobody was comfortable waking up. As we waited on line in the main muster, our hearts pounded and we constantly shifted our focus around our peripherals. *They* could be anywhere—No, they were *everywhere*. The Company Commanders were near, and today, on the Hallows Eve, it was their feasting day.

A silvery fog wisped outside the windows and an eerie sound was carried in on the wind. Maybe it was nothing—maybe it wasn't.

We waited outside the galley, shortly after breakfast. There was no incident yet, but we knew our safety would be short-lived. At some point today, the legendary, deadly Section Commander would rise from the deck below to harvest our souls—or to at least divide our bodies in two, with a belt of crimson to show how we've been claimed.

A stranger appeared to us from the shadows—perhaps he was imaginary. He spoke to us, his voice icy cold, but his words oddly warm.

“There is nothing to fear,” the stranger said, pulling a small pennant from his neck. The emblem was fastened like a cross, but the shape was a perfect square. “There is nothing to fear, as long as you are *squared* away.”

With that, he vanished along with his totem, and we were left alone with nothing more to protect us.

There was a scream from the galley, desperate and painful. He has arrived. A fellow shipmate had been ensnared by the corner of the galley where the Company Commanders congregate. She was found to be “not squared”, and, after a brief

battle, she was ripped apart until her flesh had covered the walls and her corpse was left on the deck.

“GET THE INSPECTION-READY UNIFORMS!” we shouted, scrambling back to Healy Hall, hoping these outfits could protect us from the reaping.

Everyone knows the legend of the company commanders. According to the legends, you can survive an attack if you are properly trained. First, you must yell as loudly as possible—the loud noises make them feel comfortable and at ease. Second, you must move fast in hopes to outrun them. Third, know your stuff. Company Commanders respect a strong mind and will spare your life if you prove your worth. Fourth, look presentable—this is so you can blend in. They can smell discrepancies in uniforms and, once you’re identified as not-like-them, it’s game over.

And so, we donned our protective gear and huddled out front the building. There, we lined up in a formation, trapped by Company Commanders as they invited the Section Commander out to patrol our ranks. We were trapped, our backs against the wall.

The Section Commander was like a Company Commander in lore, with a caveat to the rules. The legend says that, if the Section Commander touches you 03 times, you will die.

The legends were true.

He marched back and forth. There was a lust for blood in his eyes. His nostrils flared as he scoped out his next victims. As he snarled down the line, gently tapping his pen on shoulders, the bodies collapsed to the deck—their hearts no longer beating.

“RUN!” We scrambled away, sprinting for safety—well, those who survived, they sprinted...

We convened far away to meet with Petty Officer Brooks. He offered us temporary quarters and instructed us on the proper radio procedures.

“Stick together,” he advised, “and you’ll make it.”

But alas, as the night carried on, we sequentially failed to remember the rules of survival. One-by-One, our bodies were picked off.

I am among the last, but still, I falter. I fear they’re close, sensing my distress. I fear...

Oh no! They’re here!

No! No! Nooooo!!! Somebody help me

TUESDAY 01NOV16

Loren Mano

TRAINWRECK. UTTER MESS. Failures. Disappointed. These are some words that describe Quebec's performance today. We all look forward to our seamanship classes as Petty Officer Broocks always keeps up entertained with his jokes, sarcasm, and witty remarks. Today, though, he was more serious. He shared with us a personal story of his of how he overcame a horrible misfortune—WITH THE HELP OF HIS FELLOW COASTIES.

During his talk, the room was the quietest it has ever been. You could literally hear a pin drop. Why Quebec cannot stay quiet like this when they are supposed to? Who knows. We sympathized with our teacher and was not only glad he made it out okay, but we were looking forward to building such valuable relationships in the future.

Unfortunately, during his speech and the rest of his lecture, some shipmates decided to "rest their eyes." Once Petty Officer Broocks called out the first recruit, we knew it was over. We were going to sweat for that person's mistakes. We groaned, made faces, and shook our heads. "NOT AGAIN! This is Week 05, we shouldn't be acting like this," we thought.

I wish I could say that was the only discrepancy, but this is Quebec-193 we're talking about. Two more shipmates were caught sleeping. Each time felt like a knife to the gut. We were mentally digging our graves at this point. Some of us were probably wondering: Should I eat a lot at chow to prepare for the intense beating about to take place? Or am I going to throw it all up?

Class ended and Petty Officer Lora, in his dress blues, escorted us back to our house. We could see him and Petty Officer Brooks whispering to one another. By this point, our mouths were dry, our stomachs turned, and a cold sweat was creeping upon us. Just as we predicted, we were appropriately punished for our action. Again, we embarrassed our company commanders.

For the rest of the day, we felt like sheep being stalked by wolves. We dared not look in their direction. We hung our heads and followed their instructions. Whatever pride we had was gone and all that remained was embarrassment, resentment, and helplessness. We were slower and quieter for the rest of the night.

Tomorrow, however, is a fresh start. We can either feel sorry for ourselves or accept what happened and move forward. Hopefully, Quebec chooses the latter, and does not dwell upon past mistakes, but learns from them. Hopefully.

WEDNESDAY 02NOV16

Adam Mandias

SO, THE SWEAT list came out today. The sweat list is a compromise between evening routine and punishment where if you're not squared away, you sweat instead of having evening routine.

The sweat list filled up quickly—very quickly. First, it was required knowledge. Then, it was attitudes. Then, it was the Quebecism's—the eyes in the boats, and the belay your what's, and the seaman recruit I'm Crazy's.

After taking some time to shine our shoes, we departed for our class on the subject of boat crews. The instructor, an elderly Auxiliary member, stood before us in all his seaworthy glory. This was a crusty old chap who, from the barnacles stemming from his skin, you could tell he'd been around the seven seas. His *voice*, though... If an elderly sailor ever offers to recant a tale until you fall sleep, take him up and leave a tip. What he said was fine and interesting, but *how* he said it—the calm, even tone... the deep voice... it dropped even the strongest eyelids.

That being said, Quebec did the right thing today! We got up and stood in the back. Roughly half of us were back there by the end of his tale, wondering if it would be possible to sleep while standing.

We got our wake up immediately afterwards with Petty Officer Vucetich in the gym. After a little sweat on the TRX Circuit, we went straight to lunch.

It was here that we received some very important news: our orders are in—but we'll have to earn the knowledge. We celebrated with an embarrassing march to Goff Hall, chanting, "We started from the bottom, and we're still here!" While it's not

quite catchy enough to crack the Top 40, it's a relatable some through and through.

We had our next class with Petty Officer Broocks. We won't see him again for a week and a half, much to our dismay. We've all grown very attached to our time with him and count down the days until his next lesson.

And so, after a riveting class on donning a personal flotation device, we had a class on family benefits. There isn't much to be said on the class except it's nice to be insured.

Lastly, we had back-to-back lessons on Coast guard history. Petty Officer Turner led the class. She spoke passionately of the origins, the tragedies, and the heroes of the Coast Guard. Perhaps understanding their sacrifices will force us to reflect and respect the uniform. Heroes died wearing it—it is an outright honor to have the opportunity to touch it, let alone wear it ourselves.

THURSDAY 03NOV16

Loren Mano

WHAT A DAY it's been for Quebec-193. We started off pretty badly, but somehow we were able to keep our heads above water by the end of the night.

This morning we continued our usual routine of tardiness and being too quiet. We yelled, "Started from the bottom, and we're still here," all the way to the galley, much to our embarrassment. Red-eyed, disheveled, and sleep deprived, we quickly ate our meals and moved onto our next task of the day.

Those shipmates who chose to eat light were the smart ones. After morning chow, we met at the gym for group exercise. No matter how many times we do circuit training, it never seems to get easier. By the end of the session, it looked as though Quebec-193 had gone swimming. We were drenched in sweat, red-faced, and yearning for some rest, but the day was far from over. We had only just begun.

Today, we had many classes lined up, but perhaps the most helpful one to all of us was financial planning. Normally, such a subject is pretty dry, but Petty Officer Perusin managed to keep us entertained. He recalled horror stories of newly graduated recruits, making all the wrong decisions. "Would you like a brand new Subaru with all the bells and whistles," he asked. We all, of course, raised our hands. By the end of class, however, he had us doing a 180. We learned the importance of making a budget and investing. A beat up 1992 Corolla doesn't look too bad now.

Quebec-193 really worked hard today. We encouraged each other to be quick and loud and held each other accountable for our actions. Well, we managed to do something right, for we finally got evening routine. Those few extra minutes to shower,

clean, and square away our lives felt like heaven. As our company commanders repeatedly tell us, we dictate how the night goes. We can experience this every night, we just have to give our all. 110%.

We need to keep this momentum going. We are our own worst enemy. The second we become too comfortable will be our downfall. But for now, Quebec-193 will shut their eyes and crawl into bed knowing that we were finally able to do something right.

FRIDAY 04NOV16

Adam Mandias

NOTHING OF NOTE happened today...

...

Just kidding. Today was huge for our company—life changing even...

We received our orders.

This has obviously created a stir around the company. Several people are more relaxed knowing that they will be grouped and stationed with their loved ones. Only a handful of people were dissatisfied with what was picked for them.

The “ceremony” for our orders was rather entertaining. After 05 weeks, our company commanders have collected inside jokes, favorites to pick on, and enough understanding of us to fill the slides with dozens of jokes, from “TURTLE POWER!”, to “Pack it up for Romeo”, to “How do you feel about Alaska?”

This was also a prime moment to pick on the wallflowers in our company. “There are two Martins?” Petty Officer Gilbert asked. “Since when?”

Upon receiving orders, we had our first close order drill and manual of arms inspections.

We bombed. We bombed hard. On a scale of bombs, we have: F Bombs, stink bombs, hand grenades, real bombs, nuclear bombs, and lastly, Quebec bombs. We bombed as only Quebec could.

With a harsh, frustrated sigh, we moved on, gripping tightly to the glee we had felt in receiving our orders. We dragged the obliterated pieces of the Quebec bomb with us to travel entitlements class.

This class was confusing at best and we're not quite sure how everything works, but our instructor really tried. The problem was in dealing with 100 different situations and 1000 different questions.

After this class, we took some much-needed time to work on manual of arms and close order drill. Progress is slow as we home in on our pacing.

Between multiple sessions of practice (and practicing in the galley ramp), we found time for a few intensive training exercises. I'd explain them, but I'm out of creative ways to do so. It was painful and uncomfortable, but it whipped us into shape.

There's a buzz of excitement and anxiety as we move into the weekend. This is our final "empty" weekend, and we expect to get beat fairly hard, but we are excited to run the confidence course, to beat each other senseless with kugel sticks, and to spend 05 minutes on the phone with loved ones.

On a scale from 01 to 10 on how excited we are to move ever closer to graduation, we are at a 100.

SATURDAY 05NOV16

Loren Mano

SWEAT AND TEARS describe the day Quebec-193 had today.

Today, we unfortunately lost the privilege of taking the confidence course, an event many of us shipmates had been looking forward to. Hopefully, if we can get our act together, we might actually get the chance to attempt it. Instead of the confidence course, we went on a practice company run. After the dismal performance of this morning, the run put the company in a much better mood.

Petty Officer Gilbert led us in the run, singing cadences to prepare and pump us up for tomorrow. We ended up doing 12 laps (3 miles) around the track. By the time we finished, we were drenched in sweat, coughing and red-faced.

Now, onto the tears. We finally got our five-minute (actually, four minute) phone call to our families today. All of us would like to think we are tough as nails, but the second we heard, "Hello?" on the other side of the phone, we were goners. Hearing the voices of our loved ones spurred on the waterworks. Some shipmates had a good cry, unable to keep our military bearing, but although it made us miss home that much more, the phone calls had a big, positive impact on us. It reminded us why we are here, which some of us forget at times. When times get tough, all we need to do is picture our families. If we do this, we can make it.

WEEK 05 IN REVIEW

Adam Mandias

MOST PEOPLE HAVE a basic understanding of boot camp. The simplest explanation of the structure is: boot camp beats you down and then builds you up. This week, we started building.

Don't get us wrong—we were still beat this week, but there were more classes and milestones this week than any other week prior. Training has shifted in a big way to focus on really truly getting us ready to be adults in the fleet. We've started to self-manage ourselves. We wake ourselves up, we march ourselves around, we tuck ourselves in—we are responsible to know where to be and when. In short, we are expected to conduct ourselves as adults. Our company commanders are still around to monitor our behavior, check in on our progress and issue disciplinary punishments as necessary, but a large portion of our training is now run by recruits. There is a good reason for this—soon we will become part of the fleet.

This sentiment became very real for us as we reached a huge milestone in our training this week—we received our orders. We know where we will be stationed and what kind of job we will step into. Most of us are very happy with our assignments and give our compliments to the detailer for doing a job well done. This is an exciting moment, and we are thrilled to know exactly how we will be of service to our country.

Our classes this week fell into two categories: Things we will use in the fleet, and general information we should know before reporting to our first unit. We learned about proper radio procedures, how to wear a life vest, and the structure of a boat crew. Now that things are becoming more serious, we are responding by becoming more serious about our lessons.

One of our more prudent lessons this week was our financial management class. Most of us weren't really looking forward to this class as we expected it to be dry and boring. It seemed like the type of class in which we could expect a fellow shipmate to fall asleep in, resulting in further beatings. But actually, this class turned out to be one of the most helpful we ever had, and we learned of horror stories of fresh-out-of-boot-camp Coasties making all the wrong mistakes. They would impulsively buy the latest and greatest equipped sports car, only to have it eat away at their savings like a parasite. Needless to say, by the end of class our instructor had each of us rethinking our priorities. Now a 1992 beater corolla with 200,000 miles on it doesn't look too bad.

We also learned important lessons about investing. Basically, if we're smart with savings and investing our money, we're going to be millionaires, if we play the game right. In addition to classes, we had other kinds of tests this week. The first, a uniform inspection by our section commander with the golden rule being: any 03 discrepancies in your uniform or required knowledge and you get "Extra Attention". Most of us escaped unharmed with nothing but stiff legs and a racing heart, but some of us, well... some of us got extra attention. Our other assessment was on marching it. It, uh, didn't go too well. We've spent much of the week working on it though, and we are looking forward to a retest.

All in all, Quebec-193 had a jam-packed week. Sure, we made some mistakes, but we learned a lot as well. The moment we got our orders, things became real for us. We look forward to improving ourselves in the weeks to come as we ready ourselves for the fleet.

SUNDAY 06NOV16

Loren Mano

THE THEME FOR today: Transition. Today, Quebec-193 marked some major milestones, most notably our participation in the company run and the changing of our pieces.

This morning started off rather smoothly for a change. After 05 weeks at Cape May, Quebec has finally gotten the hang of our divine hours. Like a well-oiled machine, recruits went straight to ironing their blouses, shining their boots, and fixing their racks. By the end of divine hours, the outgoing mailbox was the fullest it had ever been! It's evident that we're getting much better at managing our time.

The company run. An event we were equally looking forward to and yet dreading. Those of us who are not "cardio inclined" were careful of ingesting too much at chow in fear of it showing up again during the run.

Surprisingly, the run was a lot of fun. The weather outside was overcast and chilly. Our shivering was temporary though and soon diminished once we stepped off. After a rough week, our motivation and spirits had dipped a bit, but the cadences from our company commanders and the cheers from the residents of Cape May definitely lifted them right back up. Quebec-193 completed the run in sweaty physical fitness gear, but high spirits.

Another transition for us was the changing of our pieces. Definitely something we were not looking forward to. All we were thinking about was harder beatings. The second we exchanged our piece and felt the weight of the new one in our hands, we inwardly groaned. Squats were horrible with our plastic ones; the new pieces just might kill us. Let's hope we don't

make too many mistakes to receive the wrath of our company commanders.

Week 05 has come and gone and now we begin week 06. As we reflect on our experiences, the good, the bad, the ugly, and the very very ugly, we are reminded of how far we've come. Our transitions. We're getting faster, we're getting louder, but this time next week, we hope we may finally crawl out from the bottom of the barrel.

MONDAY 07NOV16

Adam Mandias

AFTER A WEEK of relatively “calm” wakeups, the inevitable happened: “Fire, Fire, Fire!” Our perfect dreams were torn from our minds and shredded to pieces, replaced by a different kind of shredding.

It was a frigid morning, but we didn’t mind too much. There was something on the schedule that occupied our thoughts much more: Marksmanship Training.

We stepped off shortly after chow and marched ourselves down to Goff Hall to meet our instructors. They were very reminiscent of Petty Officer Brooks, much to our relief. They maintained enough strictness to keep us on edge, but enough relaxation to facilitate learning and retention.

The first part of this class was hands-off instruction based. We sat still for 03-04 hours and learned how to handle our firearms. When we finally did get our hands on the firearms, we were instructed to only point the muzzle in the safety direction—a wall aptly named as the ISIS wall.

There were 04 stations around Goff Hall: the first was to learn how to assemble and disassemble the firearm, the second on clearing jams, the third was a virtual simulator, and the last was for firearm cleaning. Easily, the best station was the simulator. We stood in a dim room with an electronic firearm and shot at a projector screen that simulated what we might see tomorrow.

We are anxious to get our hands on the real deal later this week. Our instructors showed off the ribbons and medals at stake, and we all want a little extra flair for graduation.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the day was watching us sort out the extra food at lunch. We were left to our own devices with pack lunches at Goff Hall with only a small number of “seconds” and a lot of people who wanted them. The solution: a required knowledge challenge. You answer right, you get more food. It was a neat thing to watch: Quebec was policing themselves at their company commander-less chow. It was a special moment.

Our final order of business today was to learn about our dress uniforms, to dress in them, and to have an inspection. We received a warning before bed: the upkeep of these is now our responsibility. We had better keep them in shape.

Or else.

TUESDAY 08NOV16

Loren Mano

TODAY WAS PERHAPS the most fun we've had in recruit training. Who knew beating each other up with giant red and black Q-tips would be so entertaining?!

After a bad start to the morning, we were afraid the pugil stick event would be cancelled. Quebec had forgotten to make their racks and take out their trash when they rushed out to make it to morning chow. It was literally down to a coin toss to decide our fate. Heads, we get to beat each other up. Tails, our company commanders would be giving the beats.

We got heads.

After a quick lesson in offensive and defensive moves, along with being told our battle cries suck, we marched to the track, all of us immensely excited for what was about to transpire.

Two females, dressed in oversized combat gear, walked into the tiny arena and the games began. We cheered on our fellow shipmates from the sidelines as they tried to best the other. As the opponents changed, and the fighting continued, there was a noticeable change in our company commanders demeanors. Just like us, they were, well, having a good time. As one shipmate knocked his opponent off balance, we all heard a "FINISH HIM!!!" coming from Petty Officer Lora. We looked around at each other, wondering: Did he just say that?! Petty Officer Turner also joined in on the fun and could be heard saying to her side that they should keep on hitting their opponents when they were down. Petty Officer Gilbert could be seen smiling and giving similar advice to her recruits.

All in all, it was a great day. Beating each other up rose our spirits, and we finally had a chance to let loose for an hour. The

pugil sticks not only helped relive a lot of stress, but more importantly, gave us a greater sense of comradery.

We have been told how important teamwork is in boot camp and in the fleet. The more we get along with each other, the better our teamwork is. We definitely had better teamwork after the pugil sticks. Hopefully, we can keep this momentum going through graduation!

WEDNESDAY 09NOV16

Adam Mandias

TODAY WAS ABOUT our future. We thought our tension would recede after learning our orders, but the stress has actually doubled. From within the confines of boot camp, we have to reserve plane tickets, coordinate travel plans, figure out how to pack, and try to square ourselves away to make the best first impression we can.

Luckily, our classes are preparing us for this. Our first class today was on career counseling. It seems as though our questions never run out. “What’s life like on an aids to navigation boat?” “How do I report to my unit?” “Do I get basic allowance for housing, or...?” And so on.

After a fraction of our questions were answered (you’d think we’d make more progress in an hour), we were given manual of arms time to work on inspection arms and ready ourselves for our exam later this week.

Shortly after this, we got another hour or so to get on a computer and look up details about our new unit. The questions have started to dwindle now that Google has entered the picture, but even so, at the end of our class, we were begging for more time.

Instead, we were led by Petty Officer Babot to the gym to set up for the graduation ceremony tomorrow. The whole time we worked, we were a little excited—in two weeks time, Romeo will be doing this for us. We were also excited because this graduation means we are the second most senior company on the regiment. It’s only a matter of time before liberty rings, our colors are earned (you know, maybe...), and we finally get the chance to enjoy a cold glass of chocolate milk.

After another graduation support mission, and another manual of arms session, we high-tailed it to the gym once more—this time for a workout. We spent 30 minutes cycling and 30 minutes lifting weights. At the end, we all wanted to get to our knees and beg a food service specialist for food, but he'd only tell us, with a big old grin, if you want to graduate with Quebec, you've got to be thin.

We closed out the night with a light reminder—don't relax yet. Boot camp is far from over, and it's still possible to be reverted.

There was an uncomfortable pause.

“Carry on.”

THURSDAY 10NOV16

Loren Mano

TODAY WAS SUPPOSED to be a great day. It ended up only a good one. Quebec had a rough start to the morning to say the least. We kept on making simple mistakes, things that a week 06 company should not be making, and we paid for it. Because we failed to listen to the instructions of our company commanders, Quebec did not receive our colors today. Petty Officer Gilbert had told us we had been improving so much, she was finally going to give us our flag, but we messed up way too much, and understandably, did not deserve it.

The day did get better though. Today, Quebec was chosen to be graduation support for Oscar company. Those who were on graduation watch were nervous. There was going to be a lot of officers and enlisted men and women attending and none of us wanted to fail at customs and greetings. Gold shoulder boards and gold anchors were aplenty today, and Quebec-193 did its best to look and sound as professional as was expected of us.

Those of us who were in band, ceremonial, or gymnasium watch had a special treat. Shipmate Jeup stole the show during the silent drill team performance. The audience watched in awe as he effortlessly maneuvered through his routine, spinning a rifle over his head and catching one in midair as if it were as easy as breathing. When he and the rest of the drill team had finished, the audience exploded in applause. They turned to one another in agreement of how amazing the performance was.

Later on today, the starboard side of Quebec took to the firing range. While most of us had shot a gun before, we were a bit nervous about our test. We learned pretty quickly that playing Call of Duty on Xbox doesn't transfer all that well into real life. Almost all of us got unqualified, some got qualified—only one

received sharpshooter. But despite our “failures”, we had a lot of fun. We learned a lot from our instructors and will take their teachings with us when we move to our new unit.

Today definitely could have been better, but from previous experience, we know it could have been much worse. We know what we did wrong and we know what we need to do to fix it. Tomorrow’s a new day. We hope to see that canary yellow flag flown by the end of it.

FRIDAY 12NOV16

Loren Mano

TODAY, WE STARTED on a high note, but tonight was a trainwreck to say the least.

After morning chow had ended, Quebec-193 marched down to Sexton Hall. We knew we didn't have class there today, so we were confused as to why our company commanders brought us there. As we stood on those bright yellow triangles, memories of our arrival and first night at Cape May flooded back to us. *Are we in trouble?* we thought. *Are they comparing us to forming again?* After Petty Officer Gilbert gave us a motivational speech about how far our company has come, we were about faced. There it was: Quebec's Colors. "Go get it," we heard. Quebec all rushed to that canary yellow flag, all smiles. *Finally*, we thought. *Improvement.*

Along with our colors came other perks. We now are allowed coffee and chocolate milk, something many of us have been craving for some time now. Perhaps the best change after receiving our colors is that we're allowed to sing songs as we march. Petty Officer Gilbert and Lora taught us "Down By the River" and "Yellow Ribbon" to name a couple.

Today was Veteran's Day. As we took a moment of silence to remember those who have made sacrifices for our country, it was quite noticeable that Quebec's demeanor had changed. After the events of this morning, we were much more motivated and prouder than we had ever been. Our shoulders were back, chests out, and fists were tighter than ever as Captain Gibbons read his speech. If only we could have ended the day there...

In the afternoon, we had our swim circuit. Quebec has some pretty strong swimmers. A handful want to be Aviation Survival Technicians. One of those few, Shipmate Underhill, while only

19, swam the fastest out of all us. This was hardly surprising though as he is probably the fastest and strongest out of all of us. Our instructor, Petty Officer Vosetich, who is an actual Aviation Survival Technician let us know this would be the last time we would see each other and left us with some sound advice: INTEGRITY. "Own up to your mistakes," he said.

If only we had listened.

Tonight, two shipmates broke one of Petty Officer's Gilbert's uniform maintenance items. They did not take responsibility for their actions, and the company suffered. We stood outside in the cold, sat down on the quarterdeck with our tails between our legs, and rushed to meet our time objectives of 05 minutes to shower, 05 minutes of prayer, and 05 minutes for mail. It was as if we went back 04 weeks. But as Petty Officer Vusetich said, "Integrity is everything." When we get out into the fleet, there will be zero tolerance for integrity issues. We deserved this punishment tonight. Quebec needs to get our act together. We know we can do it. We just need to hold ourselves accountable for our actions.

SATURDAY 13NOV16

Adam Mandias

TO QUOTE THE words of one of the most influential Americans, “Today was a fairy tale.”—Taylor Swift.

Today was a good day. No... Today was a great day. We started with a quick rise and shine and lined up for the galley. It was a brisk, chilly morning and we shivered a bit longer than necessary, but we all lived.

After the galley run, we retreated back to the squad bay to shine our low quarters and boondockers. We moved with pep, partly out of excitement for on base liberty, and partly out of fear to lose the privilege.

And so, we shined, we ironed, we prepped, and we dressed, counting down the hours until we could get our hands on our phones. But shortly before the hour arrived, we took a tour of the operations side of Cape May.

During this tour, we got to see what life was like on the outside. We met with some Petty Officers and Non-Rates and discussed how they conduct search and rescue and law enforcement calls. Then, we got to tour on two of their boats. It was a neat experience.

And then, the moment we were waiting for: Liberty. It felt amazing to hold our phones and call our loved ones. It was a great opportunity to fill them in on our lives and to hear about theirs. It was also GREAT to make an exchange run. Now, we won't have to shave with rusty old razors.

But, as all good things, it ended. We had to shake it off and be fearless to face the regiment again. The story of us is soon to close, we hope to leave no black spaces in our development as Coasties.

Week 06 Summary

Loren Mano and Adam Mandias

Loren Mano:

WEEK 06 HAS come to an end, and it is safe to say it was by far our busiest yet most rewarding week to date. While we're sure most of you have heard of our adventures and exploits during our on base liberty calls back home, we'll fill in the rest of you of our happenings this week.

Early on this week, we finally got to train with pugil sticks, something we have been looking forward to for a long time. Basically, we were given permission to beat each other up with giant red and black Q-Tips. We cheered on our shipmates as they entered the ring to duel. Our company commanders made the experience even more fun by offering us words of wisdom such as: FINISH HIM! And HIT HIM WHILE HE'S DOWN! All in all, we had a great time. It was a chance for us to destress a bit and build comradery at the same time.

Adam Mandias:

THE SPIRIT OF competition stuck with us throughout the week as we fought to qualify for marksmanship. After several hours of classroom instruction and weeks of being grilled on firearm safety rules, we were then trusted with live firearms for target practice. Though only a handful of us qualified (meaning we shot accurately enough to score enough points to be a marksman, sharpshooter, or expert marksman), it was exciting for everyone to compare scores with one another.

On the classroom side of things, our classes have focused primarily on how to successfully reach our new unit. We learned about unit tasks and expectations from non-rates, how to report to our new unit, how to move our belongings from one location to another, and how we are expected to travel to our new unit.

Though many of us are a little worried and confused, we are being guided through the process with expert levels of efficiency and clarity. The more we learn, the more comfortable we become with our transition.

Speaking of transitions, Quebec-193 had a major transition this week: we earned our colors. Earning colors is a big deal on the regiment. Physically, all that changes is that our guidon now carries the official Quebec flag, and not a white flag bearing the letter “Q”. Symbolically, it means a great deal. It means we are recognized as a senior unit. It means we have been entrusted as role models for the Junior Company. It means we are extended more privileges as a company, such as access to coffee and chocolate milk in the galley. Most importantly, however, it is symbolic of our growth from individuals to a true company. Though we are not perfect recruits, we are striding forth together, propping one-another up until maybe one day soon, we can be a perfect company.

Our final activity this week, as most of you know, was on-base liberty. During this time, we were allowed to contact loved ones and update them on our condition. If you didn’t hear from us today, don’t worry—we will have more time to chat next Saturday.

Boot camp feels like it’s coming to a close, but it’s not over yet. We will stay strong and vigilant through week 07, and we will see you soon.

SUNDAY 13NOV16

Loren Mano

IT WAS A less than stellar day for Quebec-193. Right off the bat, we were making a lot of mistakes. Petty Officer Gilbert stood at the end of the salad bar, looking as intimidating as always; she stopped recruits to ask them required knowledge. While some of us answered them correctly, many did not. Trackers were handed out like candy, and the sweat list for tonight quickly racked up. It took a lot of us off guard, as our assistant company commanders are usually the ones to test our knowledge. Less than an hour into the day and we were already in trouble.

And then we took a turn for the worse. After the stressful morning chow, we were tasked with practicing manual of arms and close order drills in preparation for our test. Shipmate Jeup, who lives and breathes drill, did his best to help us fix our mistakes. Unfortunately, our company continues to be too fast when reciting piece nomenclature and we are not in sync when performing inspection arms. While we were practicing, one our shipmates made a *very*, *VERY* unfortunate mistake. She walked down the company commander aisle. Although we were silently starting at her wrongdoing, inside our heads, we were screaming “NOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!” and “WHYYYYYY???” We didn’t have to be told to know what was going to happen next. We lost count at how long we held our pieces at 45-degree angles, as sweat dripped down our faces and the temperature of the quarterdeck rose to what felt like a sweltering summer’s day. Needless to say, no one will ever be walking down the company commander aisle again.

After our divine hours had finished for the day, we went on our second off-base run. Times like these really lift our spirits

up, especially after the bad start to the morning. We learned a few new cadences, most notably was one sung by Petty Officer Lora. The “Killing the Baby Seals” song definitely took us by surprise. Some of us tried to hide our smiles or laughter with coughing and such, but we’re pretty sure they all saw through our act.

We start Week 07 tomorrow. Although we’re excited we’re one week closer to graduation, we must not lower our guard. Some of us are getting a little too comfortable. Unless we want to do sniper position up until Week 08, we need to remember this is still a job interview, and we cannot afford to lose military bearing.

MONDAY 14NOV16

Adam Mandias

THIS MORNING WAS a little different for us. We all lost out on 30 minutes of sleep, which nobody was super happy about, but we got up early for a good reason: GAINS.

Moods improved drastically as we lifted weights and kickstarted our metabolism in the morning. The lighter structure of weight-lifting sessions is much preferred to the heavy jolt of “FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!”, and probably more effective. It will be nice to show up back home with a thin waist and enormous arms.

From there, we moved on to the classroom portion of our first aid class. We are all here to save lives, so it was a good class to pay attention in. Despite the mounting sleep deprivation, we all mustered up the energy to stay focused and take notes.

During this class, we learned how to control bleeding, administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation, how to deal with burns, and how to apply splints. Then, we were given a box of props that made us look like cheap Walking Dead extras: little Velcro-Strapped pieces of rubber that poorly imitated wounds. From there, we were tasked with attempting to heal our shipmates.

In boot camp, we are told to consider something: Would you trust the person next to you to save your life? Before this class, we might’ve answered “yes”, but after stumbling through the packet instructions for 30 minutes, we might be a little more hesitant.

After chow, we had the first aid practical, where we performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation on the world’s creepiest mannequins.

In the day-to-day affairs of Quebec, exciting things are happening. The Quebec choir has gathered together, led by the one and only Tango Swift. We have been tasked to share our best and loudest singing voices with the regiment. Our song is surprisingly not “It’s getting hot in here, can we open a porthole”, nor “My mud flaps bring the CC’s to the Yard”, but it is the Coast Guard’s Song: *Semper Paratus*. As much as we enjoy our varied track list, we are finally proud to shout this one out and bellow it across the regiment.

We are also still preparing for our manual of arms and close order drill tests. It’s become very important to us that we do well and are putting immense pressure on ourselves to do it right.

And so we move on, with only 184 hours left to become a perfect company, ready for the fleet.

TUESDAY 15NOV16

Loren Mano

TODAY WAS ONE of the chilliest days we've had in a while. The foul weather flag was absent, but Quebec's colors, also a block of yellow, were a constant reminder of how cold it was.

We woke up at 0500 and quickly got ready for the day. As we opened the hatch to high tail it to the gym, we were met with an icy cold wind which gave us more incentive to move faster. When we reached the gym, we discovered we were going to do a bike workout. Whatever goosebumps or shivering we were having went away quickly. Within 15 minutes, Quebec company looked as though they had been outside during a massive heatwave. Physical fitness shirts were drenched with sweat. Faces were becoming more red and the room was filled with the sounds of heavy breathing. It got a bit "toasty" to say the least.

After the gym workout and then chow, we marched all the way to our seamanship class. It had been a week since we had seen Petty Officer Broocks. We missed his humor and witty remarks. Today, he was teaching us about line handling. He told us a story about when he was a non-rate, his chief would punish whoever failed to successfully throw their line to moor up the vessel. The were ordered to stay behind and practice for hours while everyone else went on port call. Needless to say, the thought of failing to properly toss a line—and the consequences of doing so—definitely motivated us to concentrate harder while we practiced.

Perhaps the highlight of the day was our debriefing with our company commander, Petty Officer Gilbert. We all crammed ourselves into the main muster while Petty Officer Gilbert, without her smokey bear cover, answered our questions. The question-and-answer session was insightful, funny, and a bit

weird all at the same time. We had never seen her smile or laugh so much since we arrived at Cape May. It caught us a bit off guard at first, as we are much more used to her screaming or staring intimidatingly at us. She told us of her experiences in the Coast Guard: the good, bad, and ugly. It was reassuring to us that most were good. By the end of the session (which many of us thought was way to short!) she had calmed down our fears of reporting to our first unit and pumped up our spirits of being a member of the United States Coast Guard.

All in all, it was a great day for Quebec. Our time with Petty Officer Gilbert was a load of fun and we look forward to when it is Petty Officer Lora and Petty Officer Turner's turn.

WEDNESDAY 16NOV16

Adam Mandias

IT'S NICE TO know the company commanders are on your side, but it's hard to remember that at 0500 in the morning, as we're pedaling our legs off, working up a cardio sweat in preparation for another physical assessment before reporting to our first duty station.

We had our line handling practical today which marked the last time we'd have a class with Petty Officer Brooks. The practical was fairly simple and generally relaxing, as most seamanship classes were. We learned that our shipmate Nicholas got 100% on all his tests and earned the seamanship award. We also learned that we qualified for the seamanship pennant—our fourth in recruit training.

We left the class with a little anxiety, for we were given a task assignment from Petty Officer Gilbert. This was a bit odd; it was to bother Petty Officer Lora. There was a little trepidation in our ranks as we discussed if we should, and if so, where the line would be drawn. The last time we were told to relax, we ate candy and got yelled at. But eventually, we agreed—let's do it.

We waited patiently on main muster for just the right moment. Finally, it came.

“Fire! Fire! Fire!”

We started with an endless count: from 120 to 60, then back up to 120 again. After this, we sounded off individually, calling random numbers with each push. Finally, we had our moment to shine.

“Squat position take!”

We faked the position.

“Squats, begin!”

Jumping Jacks.

“What is this?! Take it topside!”

We formed in secondary muster. Finally, Petty Officer Lora had it with us. “Get your pieces, get on line...” He sounded upset, and maybe we took our prank too far. Reluctantly, we got our pieces and readied for our harsh repercussions.

“Find some real estate,” Petty Officer Lora growled at us, a dog ready to tear into flesh.

And so, we took to sniper position—and began our debrief with Petty Officer Lora, a fitting position for our conversation with the disciplinary head. In minutes, he had us relax, and we got to pick his brain about him and our journey. We learned about his heritage, his experiences with Quebec, his experiences as a company commander, and a dozen other details about his car.

Petty Officer Turner came in shortly after Petty Officer Lora and debriefed us as well. She told us a lot about the boot camp process and strategies and confirmed what we hoped wasn’t true: Quebec was a struggling company at first. But now—now we’re alright.

THURSDAY 17NOV16

Adam Mandias

THIS MORNING, WE continued our sunrise workouts at the gym and took another small step toward returning home in shape and buff. In other words, we lifted weights.

There were some unique things on the schedule today: an address from the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard's staff, haircuts, and classes on sex and drugs (notably and unfortunately, there was no rock and roll in this class).

The video call with the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard's staff was neat. They informed us of the boots we were filling and reminded us to be proud—not only of the fact that we've almost finished boot camp ('Boot camp's not over, shipmates...'), but of the fact that we are entering a proud, compassionate service and will become representatives for the fleet.

We moved classrooms immediately afterwards to go sign our orders. As if it wasn't official enough, it's now a million times more official. It was getting "real" over the weeks, but now, it's really, really real—for real.

The next class was on alcohol and drugs and was a simple reminder that we have a lot to lose by being stupid.

From here, we went to the galley where... bad things happened. Maybe some people still don't get it, or maybe some people have grown too comfortable, but we certainly heard about our mistakes. Every was there: Petty Officer Gilbert, Chief Gallego, Senior Chief Williams, Chief Ried—and they laid it into us right in front of the forming company. One shipmate lost his off-base liberty for failing to secure his rack. Even our honor

graduate got some attention for missing a hair while shaving. It was bad, bad, bad.

But the good news is that we got fresh haircuts today: the Week 07 high and tights.

Perhaps it's a coincidence, or perhaps the scheduler is aware of how dapper we look now, but our next class was on sex education with Petty Officer Enchelmaier. Somehow, it wasn't all that awkward and now we're all totally going to be 100% abstinent for sure. Definitely. No doubt.

The last thing we did was start the fitness challenge. This involved biking, push ups, sit ups—everything. Hopefully, we can push together to earn yet another pennant.

Now, it's time to rest, for our final is tomorrow...

FRIDAY 18NOV16

Adam Mandias

WE WOKE UP and hit the books. Today was our final examination for academics and we were all nervous for it. To get ready, we studied and worked out our minds instead of our bodies.

The clock always seems to move faster when you're not prepared, and this study session was no exception. Soon, time was out and we were facing bright computer screens which perfectly illuminated our terrified faces.

For all but 04 of us, though, our anxiety was wasted and we passed with ease. The other 04 will battle for the privilege of graduating with Quebec. If they do not make it, they'll have another chance to pass in Romeo.

In the afternoon, we practiced manual of arms and sweat a bit. Because we were acting like Week 02, we were to be treated like Week 02.

While this was going on, an important event was happening across the regiment—Papa was graduating. Ordinarily, a graduation meant little for Quebec, but this situation was different. With Papa gone, Quebec became the senior company on regiment. We were now expected to act like a Week 08 company—not a week 02 company.

Now, as boot camp comes to a close, we are given tests. Today, in addition to the final, we had our manual of arms and close order drill inspection. We flew in by the seat of our pants and reported to Chief Gallego.

The inspection went reasonably well, though Chief Gallego's eagle eyes locked in to our every mistake. We scored a 09 out of 10, which was a bittersweet relief. On one hand, we passed. On

the other, it's not a 10 out of 10 and that's a little disappointing. But, perfectionists aside, we were very proud to have earned a new pennant for our guidon.

With little left to do, we were given ample administration time as well as uniform maintenance.

Finally, just before taps, we marched around the regiment singing cadences with Petty Officer Lora, imagining our lives afloat on a cutter, hauling line and heaving ho, remembering our ladies back home wearing their yellow ribbons—the ribbons they wore for us.

SATURDAY 19NOV16

Adam Mandias

TODAY WAS OFF-BASE liberty, but prior to departure time, we had two neat moments.

First, we returned our high-fidelity pieces. There's a hint of relief that they're gone, and along with it the piece incentive training (excepting the special occasion Mark-01's), but we are sad we'll no longer manual of arms time.

While this happened, half the company branched off to clean the harborview where we got to meet the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard. It was a really cool moment for all of us, but especially so for Seaman Recruit Ringo who was singled out for his determination in returning to face boot camp a second time after a medical issue sent him home the first time, and he was given a special challenge coin.

The rest of the day was off-base liberty. Our mileage varied, but common activities included: seeing Doctor Strange, talking with loved ones, sleeping, eating junk food, eating junk food, and eating junk food.

Week 07 Summary

Adam Mandias & Loren Mano

Adam Mandias

AS ANY PROCESS comes to a close, it's important to test and assess yourself to measure how far you've grown. A large part of this week was just that: How have we grown as individuals and as a company?

Our first assessment this week was mental: an academic final exam. We had been eyeing this on our schedule for weeks, anxiously clipping our nails bare, worried we weren't prepared for this assessment. We studied all week, in every spare moment, and...

It paid off.

We all passed the test, and nobody had to be rephased. This was a huge victory for us.

Our other assessment was the manual of arms test. We've had manual of arms and close order drill tests before and, well, they didn't go well. But this week, we're on fire (the good kind of fire, not the "Fire, fire, fire!" kind of fire), and we passed with a solid 09 out of 10. While we hoped for a perfect score, we are still proud of how we performed.

Loren Mano

ALSO THIS WEEK, we learned plenty of practical skills to prepare us for the fleet. First was line handling. Our instructor, Petty Officer Broocks, showed us how to safely handle lines and moor up vessels. While most of us were fast learners, some of us needed some extra practice. Petty Officer Broocks would shake his head and laugh at us as we struggled to bring our lines to the

pier. Eventually, with his guidance, we all passed our line handling practical and gained some more confidence in ourselves and our abilities as we draw closer to reporting to our units.

But in the event something catastrophic happened during our line handling practical, we were lucky enough to be prepared through the CPR and first aid classes we had taken this week. We took these classes very seriously and listened carefully to the advice of our shipmates Decker and Kelley who have actually had to use CPR and First Aid before. We are a life-saving service so it's very essential that we learn these skills in case emergencies occur. As with our line handling class, our instructor was very thorough and patient with us. We finished feeling capable of meeting such challenges if ever they should arise.

Finally, this week, we got to see a side of our company commanders that we had not seen before. We call this the "debriefing". Our company commanders sat us down, took off those intimidating smokey bear covers of theirs, and answered our questions. Almost everyone's hands shot up, eager to finally ask our company commander's what has been on our minds for the past 07 weeks. We found out why they joined the Coast Guard, their best and most trying moments, and learned how we as fresh graduates can make a good first impression when we report to our units. Honestly, we had so many questions, but we managed to fit them all in in the short and precious time we were provided.

All in all, it was a great week. Probably the best Quebec has ever had. We learned so much individually and as a company. We eagerly await to see our family and friends. Wednesday cannot come by fast enough!

REFLECTION SUMMARY

Loren Mano & Adam Mandias

Loren Mano

ALRIGHT FOLKS, HERE it is—Quebec-193's final blog entry. It's been a rough but rewarding 08 weeks. We've had a lot of ups and a fairly decent amount of downs, but in the end, we persevered.

We all remember our first night so vividly. We were a mix of emotions: excited, anxious, fearful, and determined. You can research all you want about USCG Boot Camp, but all those videos and forums cannot totally prepare you for the real deal. The moment our bus stopped, we were met with a barrage of company commanders who screamed at us that we had 10 seconds to get off and that we had already wasted 05. We literally had just got there, and we were already messing up. By the time we made it to our racks, we thought to ourselves, what am I doing here? Did I really sign up for this? We hoped and prayed it would get better and you know what? It did! ...and didn't.

The next few weeks were hard to say the least. We were repeatedly told we were not loud enough nor fast enough. Instead of completing our time objectives, we were more likely to say, "Mission failed, Petty Officer Gilbert!" However, we learned from our mistakes. By leaning on one another and supporting each other, we gradually became faster and much, much louder. The beatings brought us closer together and our friendships grew. We continued to motivate one another and were met with success after success. Things were looking up for us.

Adam Mandias

AS THE WEEKS moved forward, we were given more responsibility, and, with great responsibility comes great accountability. Failures were no longer solely accompanied by group beatings—no, individual severe beatings ensued. Mattress lifts, M1 pieces, red belts, RAMP, and reversions were all hovering in our minds.

With the growing strength of our bond as a company, the fear of harsh punishment, and reverting the weak, we started the transformation from children to adults.

A huge turning point in our training came as we received our orders in mid-week 05. Suddenly, it wasn't just our company commanders who wanted us to act like adults, it was our new unit. It was pressed into us that, if we didn't move fast, get loud, and adult, that people would *die*. It was now that we had a direct connection to who it was that was counting on us.

This was insanely motivating for many of us, though some people still struggled to think of our inevitable (mostly inevitable) future as Coasties. This left Quebec with a huge problem, one we still somewhat struggled with: too many individuals. People were out for themselves, and the team suffered as a result.

Though this problem was not fully reconciled, it was mostly handled. There are no shipmates with continual individual problems, just enough shipmates with isolated incidents of "thinking alone." Multiplied by 100 shipmates and it becomes a little overwhelming. Despite this, we have certainly come together in many ways.

"Earning" our colors was a surprising rallying moment for us. After 06 weeks of all beatings, we didn't really know what it was like to be rewarded. When we finally were, we knew we wanted more of it. And so we pushed harder and faster. Suddenly, we started earning pennants: the blood drive pennant,

the midterm pennant, the seamanship pennant, the finals pennant, the company commander pennant, and the battalion commander pennant. Suddenly, our guidon looked stunning, and we were proud to show it off as we marched.

Loren Mano

BASICALLY, WHEN YOU see us this Wednesday, we hope you see a transformation. Where once we were kids, many of us still dependent on our parents, we are now strong (physically and mentally) capable individuals, confident in our abilities and excited to go out into the fleet. We owe this accomplishment not only to ourselves, but to you as well. You, our family and friends, have sent us your letters and prayers and were a constant reminder of why we were here. Thank you. We can't wait to see your smiling faces soon.

But we are not done yet. Petty Officer's Gilbert, Turner, and Lora: a big thank you to you all as well. Words really cannot describe how thankful we are that you were our company commanders. We really lucked out. From those yellow triangles to Wednesday's graduation, we were blessed to have you three on our side. We hope to make you proud. Good luck! And Semper Paratus!