On March 18-21, 2010, the Notre Dame NROTC Unit hosted its 15th Annual Naval Leadership Weekend (NLW). Over 120 cadets and midshipmen from ROTC Units across the United States attended this event, staying at the Sacred Heart Parish on Notre Dame’s campus. NLW is a chance for them to hear from prominent speakers discussing issues like leadership, ethics and the Navy/Marine Corps team. This year’s NLW coordinator was 2/C Arianna Cassani. She and her outstanding staff deserve many thanks for their hard work putting together this wonderful event.

The theme for this year’s event was “The Evolving Role of the Navy/Marine Corps Team Against Unconventional Warfare,” and the weekend kicked off on Friday morning with a symposium from Commander Mark A. Becker, USN, OPNAV N703 SeaBasing. He spoke about leadership and being a junior officer in the Navy. The next speaker was Commander Kris Doyle, USN, Commanding Officer of USS FREEDOM (LCS1) BLUE CREW. She spoke about the development and operational testing of the new Littoral Combat Ship. After lunch, 1st Sgt. William Bodette, USMC, talked about his real life combat experiences and the importance of building a healthy relationship between junior officers and their senior enlisted.

Friday ended with the participants breaking into discussion groups focusing on ethical decision making scenarios. The scenarios described specific moral dilemmas facing naval officers and challenged the participants to find the most appropriate solution.

Saturday morning started with a panel discussion called “Addressing the Threat of Non-State Actors Within and Across State Boundaries: Our Rights and Duties.” The panel consisted of Dr. Michael Daniel Lindley, Notre Dame Professor of Political Science; Dr. Molly Melin, Loyola University of Chicago Professor of Political Science; Dr. Daniel Philpott, Notre Dame Professor of Peace Studies; and Mr. Jacob Cusack, a Notre Dame NROTC alum who was deployed to Iraq as a junior officer in the Marine Corps. Each member discussed the topics of ethical challenges in the Middle East and the future of international security for the region. ROTC cadets and midshipmen were then given the opportunity to challenge and question the panelists on each of their different perspectives.

The most anticipated event of the weekend was the formal dinner in the Notre Dame Stadium Press Box. The capstone speaker was LtGen Joseph Dunford Jr, USMC, Commanding General 1 MEF. He began with a speech on leadership, what it meant to be a true leader, and mentioned a story about a young Marine who died in Iwo Jima. Then he opened the floor to questions focusing more on current military challenges and how the Navy/Marine Corps team is adjusting to meet them. It was quite an honor to have such a distinguished officer come and speak for the evening. The 2010 NLW was a great success in every way. Bravo Zulu to all those that worked hard to make it happen!
I am exceedingly impressed with the growth I have seen in the battalion this semester, as well as the individual growth I have noticed in all of you. I have been fortunate to serve as a staff member on two of the past three O-Weeks, so I have been able to witness many of you from the moment you stepped into Pasquerilla Center, blissfully unaware of the challenges that the next four years would hold.

2/C, as I washed your sweaty PT gear and bandaged your blistered feet, I watched you suffer the transition to naval life. 1/C were the most intimidating people in the world to you at the time. Yet, this year I watched some of you contact admirals and generals to attend NLW and display incredible authority in ensuring that the tradition of this prestigious weekend continued. Under your leadership, a new tradition was formed as well, the Wounded Warrior Run. This was also an incredible success thanks to the influence and dedication of your class. During O-Week, you struggled to juggle the heap of jackets, shoes, and other provisions as we marched you around campus, and now you juggle academics, extra-curriculars, and ROTC far better than most. You have come such a long way. I have great confidence that the battalion will be in excellent hands and will continue to grow and improve under your leadership next year.

Unfortunately, 3/C, I was not able to participate in your O-Week. As the format of the week continually changed and, in my mind, alleviated many of the challenges I faced in my orientation, I had my doubts about you guys. How does paintball teach you about bearing and military courtesy and how to perform within the battalion? But I confess I must eat my words, because your class displays such an enthusiasm and your battalion involvement continually astounds me. Continue to take on challenges as more leadership opportunities open up to you.

4/C, the format of your O-Week changed even more from what the upperclassmen experienced. I’m sure you didn’t know what you had gotten yourselves into as we drove up to Ft. Custer. I watched you all stumble through the forest during Land Nav trying to locate your next box, and now you can navigate your way from Jordan to the dining hall faster than anyone. Drill also proved to be a struggle for many of you, but you definitely out-marshaled everyone during the PIR this semester. As always, this year’s freshman class was proclaimed the smartest and most accomplished group to enter Notre Dame, so prove it. This is your time to jump in and make mistakes and learn from them. ROTC will give you the best chance to learn about yourself and to improve yourself, so take full advantage of this opportunity in the coming years.

1/C, we are now weeks away from commissioning as Navy and Marine Corps officers. We endured more than most during our O-Week as we were tempted by fat-bombs, forced to hem our own pants, and taken on death-marches around campus. Yet we toughed it out, and I am proud of what our small class has accomplished this year. I have been so privileged to have had this opportunity to lead you this semester. I have learned so much from all of you, and I hope our paths cross again once we enter the fleet.
A Message from the CO

CAPT Dale Nees, USN

Battalion of Midshipmen, staff, family and friends of the Unit, congratulations on another great year. As we wrap up the 2009-2010 academic year I want to reflect on some of the many accomplishments of the Naval ROTC Unit at Notre Dame, especially this past semester. When we started the year the unit was at about 110 midshipmen. During the course of the two semesters that number swelled to as large as 118 and settled out at 116. We saw some change of options, gained some college program students, and were able to award several additional scholarships. Currently, we sit at 21 Marine Option and 95 Navy Option midshipmen and officer candidate students. Looking ahead, I estimate we will start the Fall Semester with around 130-135 midshipmen, the largest number in several years. Some may say this is due to a struggling economy, or perhaps the rising cost of education; however to choose to join the military at a time of war goes beyond simple economics – it goes to the core of you young men and women wanting to serve our country. The XO and MOI articles in this edition of the Irish Pennant are exactly to the point and I commend them on how well they articulate your quality of service.

We started the semester weary of whether we were going to have sufficient participation to host what would be our 15th Annual Naval Leadership Weekend. Both speakers and (midshipmen) participants were falling by the wayside. However, through the persistent efforts of the NLW midshipmen and officer staffs they engaged the 60+ NROTC units from around the country and were able to fill the available seats for the conference. Additionally, they diligently worked to find quality speakers which included our keynote speaker, LtGen Dunford, USMC, Commanding General 1st MEF. The leadership conference was a big success and continued a tradition unique to Notre Dame. Hats off to MIDN 2/C Arianna Cassani (and her staff) in coordinating the event and to LT DeWalt the faculty advisor.

There was a new event on the calendar this year orchestrated principally by MIDN 2/C Zak, the first of hopefully many more to come, March Madness 10K runs to support the Wounded Warrior Project. This event raised $4000 for the Wounded Warrior Project and sequenced well as a warm-up for the Notre Dame Holy Half Marathon a couple weeks later. I just wish it could have “warmed-up” for this run. The Battalion was well represented at the event by three distinct groups; those that ran and beat the CO (small minority), those that ran and finished behind him, and those afraid to run against the old man – but at least they cheered well! Next year I’m sure everyone will want to run.

Our seniors did a tremendous job leading the Battalion, especially the Battalion Commander, MIDN 1/C Katherine Gomrick, Battalion XO, MIDN 1/C Alex Lough and Battalion OPS, MIDN 1/C John Sabol. In addition to the events mentioned above they also lead the Battalion in the Presidential Pass-in-Review and Warrior Night. They, and their classmates, will be joining the fleet operating forces very shortly as one of the most diverse group of warfare specialists to come out of Notre Dame. They include the Marine Corps, Nurse Corps, Naval Aviation, Submarine Warfare, Surface Warfare (both conventional and nuclear power), and Special Warfare (SEALS). As they depart Notre Dame, I’m confident they are ready to lead the most sophisticated Navy and Marine Corps team in history. I couldn’t be more proud and salute each and every one of them for making the choice (and sacrifice) to serve our great country. God speed! To all those returning in the fall, have a safe and productive summer during your various training cruises, OCS, mountain warfare, summer school, etc., and we’ll see you in August. Go Irish, Go Navy, and Semper Fi.
As the end of the academic year approaches, I would like to take this opportunity to leave you, the Midshipmen of Notre Dame’s NROTC Unit, with two key thoughts.

First, you should all be quite proud of all you have accomplished this year. From Freshmen Orientation to the Navy-Marine Corps Birthday Ball to Naval Leadership Weekend (NLW) to the March Madness 10K run in support of the Wounded Warrior Project to Warrior Night, and to your outstanding academic achievements in the classroom, you have conducted yourselves with the highest levels of dedication, camaraderie, and motivation to excel. But what really stands out in my mind is the level at which you have shown your commitment to the notion of service to others.

I firmly believe that the profession for which you are so diligently training, that of being naval officers, is precisely grounded in this belief of service to others, whether they be your fellow midshipmen in the battalion, your classmates at Notre Dame, your shipmates in the Navy and Marine Corps, your fellow citizens in the local community or across our country, or those less fortunate individuals around the globe (consider the Navy’s recent efforts in Humanitarian Assistance-Disaster Relief missions). This core ideal, that we are called on to serve others, in peacetime by local volunteer work and humanitarian missions or in war by defending our country and its citizens, is one that you have adamantly displayed this past year by all of the projects, large and small, in which you have participated as members of the university community and as members of the NROTC unit.

For your efforts in this regard, service to others, you should likewise be extremely proud - I know I am proud of you all. I would urge you to never forget that this is why we wear the uniform as members of the naval services – so we can serve others by aiding, assisting, protecting, and defending those who need what we may offer. Being selfless is a job requirement of our profession – by your actions this year you have demonstrated your understanding of this principle.

Second, I would remind you that you are part of something special, and the expectation is that, while you wear the uniform signifying your dedication to this organization and the citizens of our country, you will always conduct yourselves with the highest levels of integrity and honor.

You may not have considered this fully yet, but by being members of the NROTC unit at Notre Dame, you are directly representing various entities – the University of Notre Dame, the NROTC unit and its staff, the US Navy and Marine Corps, and the government of the United States. Yes, it is quite a lot to ponder, but I remind you of this because your conduct has consequences and implications, good and bad, that reflect upon these entities you represent.

So as you prepare for your summer midshipman training cruises that may take you to places all over the globe or to enter the fleet as commissioned officers, never forget that you are held to the highest standards precisely because you, as officer candidates or newly commissioned officers, represent your university, your service, and your country. As you depart Notre Dame this May, have fun, learn as much as you can, embrace the opportunities with which you have been presented, and represent these organizations well with actions that embody the core concepts that they espouse. And did I mention HAVE FUN? Good luck and GO IRISH!
Bernando Garcia: 3-Time Bengal Bouts Champion

MIDN 4/C Adams, USNR

On Saturday evening, February 27th, 2010, MIDN 3/C Bernardo Garcia won the Bengal Bouts Championship for the 189 pounds weight class in Notre Dame’s 80th annual men’s boxing tournament held in Notre Dame’s brand-new Purcell Pavilion. This year, Bengal Bouts had two hundred competitors ranging from freshmen to graduate and law school students.

Bengal Bouts was started back in 1920 by legendary football coach Knute Rockne, and raises funds for Holy Cross missions in Bangladesh. The slogan of the event is “Strong Bodies Fight, that Weak Bodies may be Nourished.” Training for Bengal Bouts beings in October and lasts through February. Training is generally fairly intense; MIDN Garcia says that he never actually stopped during the “off-season”. Garcia compared a Bengal Bouts work-out to an “extended Monday morning PT session” with drills and sparring afterwards.

This year was not Garcia’s first time in the boxing ring. Since first competing in Bengal Bouts his freshmen year, he has an overall record of 12-0. He has won his three Bengal Bouts Championships at weight classes ranging from 170 pounds to 189 pounds. When asked why he wanted to compete in Bengal Bouts, Garcia stated, “I wanted to continue competing in college like I did in high school. The Bengal Bouts seemed like an appropriate outlet for this competitiveness. Boxing is something that I’ve wanted to do since I was little.” Boxing, like much of the other club sports on campus, allows students who are not varsity athletes to continue training in a competitive environment.

Bengal Bouts is also mentally grueling. According to MIDN Garcia, it forces you “to know how your body and mind react to adrenaline that comes with the competition and with getting punched in the face.” This is one of the biggest hurdles the boxers must overcome; the mental toughness it takes to accept a punch to the face. It also forces the boxers to develop quicker, faster reflexes in order to anticipate and respond to punches during the rounds of competition. Bengal Bouts also teaches other important life lessons to the boxers. Bengal Bouts teaches its boxers the ability to compete with a fair, sportsmanlike attitude and extreme discipline. MIDN Garcia credits Bengal Bouts for helping him learn about himself. According to him, “when you are punched in the face, you learn more about your temperament than in any other capacity. I’ve learned about myself through boxing.”

Whether done to continue a sport and remain physically active or simply to try their hand at something new, Bengal Bouts gives the men at Notre Dame, like MIDN Garcia, the ability to test their skill while engaging in service to others. Beyond competition, Bengal Bouts helps to raise funds for charities half way around the world.
From the MOI’s Desk

MAJ David Hart, USMC

Midshipmen of Notre Dame and St. Mary’s, it is hard to believe that the summer is already here. Life moves fast. I would imagine the graduating seniors are having similar thoughts in regards to how quickly their four years of college have passed. My hope is that this year’s seniors are pleased (warfighters are not ever satisfied) with the manner in which they were prepared, and prepared themselves, for service in the Fleet and Operating Forces. As they reflect on their time at Notre Dame and St. Mary’s, the seniors should feel that every available opportunity to prepare physically, mentally, and spiritually for what lies ahead of them was effectively exploited. It is implied that the seniors possess the moral, intellectual, and physical qualities for commissioning, and have successfully displayed the leadership potential to serve as company grade officers in the Fleet and Operating Forces. They would not be receiving their commissions if they had not successfully “passed” our (NROTC unit’s) education, training, screening and evaluation process. Only the seniors know if they were true to themselves and the “system”.

I would offer it is not ever too late to seek self improvement as this should be a continuing action, a work in progress, which should not ever stop. Seniors, life will become significantly more challenging; you will have to figure out how to effectively balance hectic schedules in which the focus is on serving, teaching, leading, and mentoring your enlisted Sailors and Marines, mastering your trade, and continuing to better prepare yourselves for future threats and leadership challenges. The education and training process never stops for an officer - it is continuous and evolves as one’s rank and responsibility increases. Do not ever be satisfied. Continue to push yourself and those you are so privileged to serve and lead.

We are expected to outlearn, outthink, and outfight our enemies. The most challenging aspect of balancing all of your impending competing interests will be to find time to conduct personal self improvement. In the high stress world you are about to enter, many officers find personal physical training to be therapeutic. I challenge you to devote an hour everyday out of your daily battle rhythm to physical training, an hour everyday enhancing your intellect (read something for you), and whatever time you need spiritually. This will provide balance to your life which you will need in order to operate at an optimum level. Your enlisted Sailors and Marines deserve nothing less. Seniors, as you get ready to go into the attack, I commend you for your first four years of service and for the example you set at Notre Dame and St. Mary’s. Many of the lessons you learned here will serve you and those you lead well.

Underclassmen, you have a little more time to figure out your daily battle rhythm and make the required adjustment before you join the active duty ranks. The sooner you figure this out the better off you (and those that you will serve and lead) will be. You have completed another successful year as part of the Marine Corps and Navy team; you have many accomplishments of which to be proud. Take the numerous lessons learned from this past year (some more painful than others) and apply them to summer training and to the fall semester.

I would challenge you to learn as much as you can from your upcoming summer training. Talk to other midshipmen from across the country, and if they are getting something beneficial in their program that you do not get here, challenge us when you get back. The active duty staff exists for you, and if there are some best practices in other units that can better prepare you for the rigors of commissioned service then we should be applying them. You continue to impress me with your professionalism, dedication to duty, and tenacity to succeed. Do not lose that fire - it makes you who you are, some of the finest Americans with whom I have served in my career.

I commend you all on your chosen profession; you are an exceptional breed. I look forward to serving with you again next semester, and remember to stay focused. You owe that to the future young Americans and their families that you are going to serve.

Semper Fidelis.
2/C Midshipmen Attend USNA Conference

MIDN 3/C Kelly, USNR

For the past twenty-three years, the United States Naval Academy has hosted their annual Leadership Conference. From its inception, the conference has dealt with relevant leadership topics that would enhance the professional development of future military and civilian leaders. This event brings together over 200 undergraduates from around the country. The participants are made up of members from the country’s service academies, ROTC Units, and civilian leadership programs. This year, Notre Dame’s Naval ROTC Unit had the honor to send three of the top 2/C Midshipmen from the Battalion: Eric Leis, Nick Geraci, and Matthew Zak.

This year’s conference was titled “Leadership Under Stress: Transforming Crisis into Opportunity.” This title was an appropriate focus given that, for the first time in our country’s history, we have been involved in two distinct wars for seven years and the stress these conflicts have put on those in the armed forces is unique. The conference was opened by the Superintendent of the Naval Academy, Vice Admiral Jeffery Fowler, USN. His comments were based on the lesson that one gains leadership experience through every endeavor. Following Vice Admiral Fowler’s remarks, Bill George, professor at the Harvard Business School, gave the keynote address. Professor George reminded those in attendance that a great leader is not made in the classroom, but in the situations that occur throughout his or her life. He stated that great leaders show themselves in times of crisis and made an appropriate analogy; “Smooth seas never created a great mariner.”

The lunchtime speaker for the first day was former Indiana governor and Notre Dame alum Joe Kernan. Governor Kernan is a frequent visitor of the Notre Dame NROTC Battalion and has been present at numerous events and drill periods. He spoke to the participants about his experiences as a POW and as governor. He mentioned a few fundamental principles of good leadership but stressed that each person develops his or her own leadership style differently. Following lunch, the three midshipmen from Notre Dame had a chance to speak personally with Governor Kernan. Although the discussion began with the topic of leadership, unsurprisingly it quickly turned to the current state of Notre Dame Football.

The final speech of the day was the Forrestal lecture, which was presented by former NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw. Mr. Brokaw talked about how our generation has been shaped by the many unexpected events of the last decade and pointed out that if the United States is to continue being the world’s foremost power, “all hands must be on deck.” Throughout his speech, his emphasis was on the importance of encouraging the civilian population to volunteer for service. The three day conference brought together some of the greatest leaders and minds of our country, and Midshipmen Leis, Geraci, and Zak left the conference inspired to continue their own professional development towards becoming better leaders. They all agreed that “it’s clear from this conference, that there is no substitute for experience.”

Editor’s Note

MIDN 1/C Ryan, USNR

I would like to thank my staff for all their help in making this semester’s edition of The Irish Pennant a success. Also, best of luck to all my fellow seniors as we head out into the Fleet. GO IRISH! GO NAVY!
Flyin’ Irish Basketball Tournament

MIDN 3/C Hulke, USNR

Well before the mayhem of March Madness got underway, ROTC units already had basketball on their minds. As the spring semester kicked off, hundreds of cadets and midshipmen honed their talent on the court and boarded flights to Indiana.

Each year, the Air Force ROTC unit of Notre Dame hosts one of the most renowned five-on-five basketball tournaments in the country. The Flyin’ Irish Basketball Tournament started on Friday, January 29 and continued through Sunday, January 31. The teams were lucky enough to compete in the main gym of the Joyce Center, as well as the pit and north dome. The teams were split into brackets of four teams each, with the winner of each advancing to the playoffs. Both men and women participated, and all branches of the military were represented. Local and distant colleges sent teams, including Texas A&M, West Virginia, Penn State, Marquette, IUPUI, Michigan State, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Notre Dame formed a competitive Tri-Military team, which challenged Texas A&M in the championship game. Texas A&M won the men’s trophy and IUPUI took the women’s; Notre Dame teams were the runners-up in each tournament. MIDN 3/C John McCabe was the men’s tournament MVP.

“Some of the games were really close, like the Texas A&M vs. Wisconsin game, at only five points,” remarked student official Michael Jackson. “Others were blowouts.” Though the scores were important, they didn’t dominate the tournament. Between games, players from different schools and branches had the opportunity to socialize, emphasizing that while rivalries exist, the common interest in athletics, leadership, and teamwork cements bonds that work deep into the heart of the military.

Cadet Trent McMullen, who volunteered to help organize the tournament stated, “No matter how heated a certain game [got], once off the court, we [were] all striving for the same goal; protecting this great nation.” More than anything else, military service sets the Flyin’ Irish Tournament apart from other five-on-five events. Not only does the high level of player integrity make it possible for a single official to referee each game, but it helps competing teams learn more about those in the military family in an athletic environment. Teams developed deep connections with their teammates, allowing them to depend on each other just as they will have to in the field.

Military tenacity was also abundant. Unlike many civilian teams, ROTC teams showed no signs of weakness after tough losses. They were trained to move into the next fight with a defined plan and coordination, and the players treated each new game as a challenge to be met.

“All of the players and teams displayed great sportsmanship and integrity, which helped the tournament move so smoothly through the weekend,” reported Cadet Kevin McKernan. Players and staff alike enjoyed the success and novelty of the tournament, and many plan to return for next year’s competition. “This tournament is such a unique opportunity,” marveled Jackson. “On ND’s varsity floor, you have the chance the put yourself in the shoes of some of the best athletes, those who have played in the Big East and NCAA; all the while knowing that they will never put themselves in your shoes. You are working for something bigger than yourself and enjoying the adrenaline of exercise at the same time.”
10k For a Good Cause

MIDN 2/C Patterson, USNR

Early in the morning of March 27, over 150 runners assembled near the Clarke Memorial Fountain to begin the first annual March Madness 10k Run hosted by the Trident Naval Society in partnership with ATLAS (Army ROTC) and Arnold Air Society. The race was organized in order to benefit the Wounded Warrior Project, an organization that serves “to raise awareness and enlist the public’s aid for the needs of severely injured service men and women, to help severely injured service members aid and assist each other and to provide unique, direct programs and services to meet the needs of severely injured service members.” The inaugural event raised $4,000 for this worthy organization.

Despite it being a little bit cold, with temperatures in the high 30s, participants in the race included civilian students, Navy midshipmen, Army and Air Force cadets, and ROTC cadre from all three branches. The head of Trident Naval Society, MIDN 2/C Matthew Zak, enlisted the help of many other volunteers and the race went on without a hitch. MIDN 2/C Zak and his volunteers could be found setting up equipment for the race at 0700, registering runners for the race to start at 0930, and even handing out water at multiple locations around the 2-lap, 6.2 mile race around campus.

The winner of the race finished in just under 36 minutes. 2/C Andy Bradford was the first male midshipman to finish and 4/C Alison Buckley was the first female midshipman to finish. The race received praise from many of the runners who participated. Siegfried Hall resident Eric Bens said, “it was one of the most organized races I’ve participated in since coming to Notre Dame. Very well done.” This outstanding praise can be attributed to MIDN 2/C Zak and the entire Trident Staff, whose work began many months before the first runner crossed the finish line.
Congratulations 3/C Garcia!

MIDN 3/C Medina, USMCR

Adrianna Garcia, a dedicated midshipmen of Notre Dame’s Naval ROTC Unit, was recognized on April 15, 2010, for her immense commitment towards community service and the university. Every year the Notre Dame Alumni Association recognizes an individual that represents the qualities of Mike Russo with an award in his honor. Russo, a former student at Notre Dame, died as a result of injuries from a traffic accident in May of 1990 on his way home after his freshman year. According to the Notre Dame Alumni Association, he is remembered for his “enthusiasm, thoughtfulness, caring nature and great sense of humor.” Adrianna was recognized for the qualities that emulate the character of Mike Russo and was honored to receive the award.

Adrianna’s passion for service is well documented. In high school, she served as Alaska’s representative for the D.A.R.E. America Board. At Notre Dame, she volunteers within the NROTC unit, works with the Catholic Workers Society at St. Margaret’s House, and she, along with two other fellow students, established a Big Sister and Big Brother program in McGlinn Hall. In 2009, Adrianna spent her Spring Break on an Appalachia Service Trip in David, Kentucky, where she provided assistance to teachers and students. She never fails at exceeding her expectations as a Notre Dame student as well as a midshipman. She has shown great loyalty to the values of Notre Dame and her moral character and dedication to the university and the unit has made a significant impact. Adrianna will commission as an Ensign in the United States Navy in May 2012, and we expect her success to continue in the future.