The Irish Pennant

University of Notre Dame Naval ROTC
Spring Semester 2019
Battalion,

Congratulations on the successful completion of another academic year. As I come to the end of my second year in command of NROTCU Notre Dame, I continue to be impressed by your accomplishments and involvement in the community.

The past semester was highlighted by an outstanding Naval Leadership Weekend (NLW), culminating in the inspirational keynote address by LtGen (ret.) Sattler. The leadership demonstrated by the NLW staff, specifically MIDN 2/C Feeley and Barrett was outstanding. Continuing our close relationship with the Notre Dame International Security Center, our MIDN participated a Small Unit Leadership Exercise with completely positive feedback. Additionally, the 1/C MIDN held a fantastic evening of tradition and bonding during our annual Dining In. Congratulations are in order as well in the battalion earning the coveted Commander’s Cup, ultimately defeating the Army in a volleyball tie-breaker. Also, in keeping with our call to serve the community, the battalion continued their excellent work in support of Our Lady of the Road and Run Forrest Run.

Well done to the outstanding leadership demonstrated by the Senior Class through the year. I fully anticipate your success as you transition to the Fleet. Good luck to the incoming leadership from the Junior Class as you take over Battalion Operations. I look forward to a successful summer cruise period, and a safe return to campus for 2019 - 2020.

Stay safe, make good choices, and Go Irish, Go Navy, and God Bless the United States of America.

Captain Mark A. Prokopius, US Navy, Commanding Officer
Warriors,

Well done on a fantastic spring semester! You all were brilliant and performed superbly. As I’ve stated in previous Irish Pennant submissions, practice discipline and keep the “full-court” press on through your last final exam, your last project, and your last paper.

Soon, you’ll be shifting your focus towards Summer Cruise. Please take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about the Naval Service and to learn more about yourself; you get what you put into it . . . so give it your Fighting Irish and Belles best!

Congratulations to all our soon-to-be Ensigns and Second Lieutenants. Much of your career in the Navy and Marine Corps will be influenced by timing, so concentrate on the one thing you can control – your performance. Perform magnificently and give 100% during your initial community schoolhouse; have no regrets. Then when you check into your first command, quickly earn your warfare qualification and get involved with your Sailors and Marines. Master what you can control and things will fall in place for you.

Thank you for an outstanding three years. It’s time for me and my family to PCS (permanent change of station) one last time before retirement. We’re heading back to where it all began over 25 years ago, NAS Pensacola – the Cradle of Naval Aviation.

Fly Navy!
Chuck Dittbenner,
Commander, USN
Another year marked by improvements and successes.

For the 4/C, I hope you take some time to look back and reflect on how far you’ve come over the past year. And during that reflection, there should be a significant amount of pride based on that growth. The battalion is firmly within your grip, and I look forward to seeing you lead next year’s 4/C by your example.

For the 3/C, I could not be prouder. Your maturity and ownership of the battalion is a daily source of motivation for myself and the rest of the staff, and I’m excited to see how each of you step into greater roles of responsibility in the upcoming year.

For the 2/C, I want you to know how energized I am by your collective enthusiasm. The level of talent and vision among you is staggering, and I firmly believe that your class will leave a lasting impression on all classes that follow. Represent our unit well during summer cruise, and get rest while you can. I expect great things from you in the Fall.

For the 1/C, congratulations on a job well done, and I welcome you as company-grade officers. Some of you will hit the operating forces in only a few short weeks, and I envy the opportunities you’ll have to lead and make your mark. Others of you still have a year – or several – of training to complete prior to reaching the fleet. To those, I challenge you to remain focused at the task at hand. These tasks will be thrilling or monotonous, simple or arduous, your best and worst experiences. I ask that you trust the institution, and put everything you have into everything they ask.

Whether a rising 3/C or a soon-to-be-commissioned officer, remember that your training exists in order to make you as prepared an officer as your Marines and Sailors deserve you to be when you arrive.

Continue to march, and Semper Fidelis!

Captain Brockelmeyer, U.S. Marine Corps
Midshipmen of the Notre Dame Battalion,

Congratulations on the successful completion of another spring semester and school year! You should all be so proud of the hard work you have put into your academics, physical fitness, and battalion responsibilities, in addition to your outstanding work in dorms, on campus, and in the South Bend community. You have not only continued to represent this battalion well but have expanded our presence in and positive impact upon these communities.

One of the most significant changes I have witnessed this semester has been the development and growth of interpersonal relationships, both within classes and across class lines. This profession, although heavily dependent upon personal qualifications, technical expertise, and in-depth training, is built on and around real people, and our Navy functions best when teams are strong and well-supported. Knowledge alone cannot make you a good leader; rather, leadership comes from the development of personal connections and relationships, the ability to talk, empathize, connect, and engage with people who are vastly different from you in age, beliefs, interests, and every other way imaginable. This time in your lives is a fundamental stepping stone in that development, and the formation of a healthy, supportive, and engaging battalion culture is absolutely crucial.

In my time as a member of this battalion, I have known some incredibly talented and capable individuals, but nothing brings me more hope for the future than all of you, from the 4/C up to my peers. As the 1/C prepare to graduate, we all rest easy knowing that the battalion is in good hands with next year’s dedicated and ambitious leadership.

Lastly, I’d like to remind you all of the gravity of our position: while we are college students right now, we are also already members of a very serious profession, and our time in college is preparing us to be effective military officers. That is an immense honor that comes with many benefits, but it is also a burden and sacrifice that we have chosen to take on, freely and intentionally. Remember that your friends and families, our great nation, and the friends and families of your sailors are counting on you to be not just capable officers, but great ones.

Keep up your outstanding work on your cruises this summer and go out into the fleet with the same passion and drive you have exhibited all year here at Notre Dame. Challenge yourselves, embrace every opportunity that comes your way, and enjoy every moment. Thank you all for making my final semester here the best one yet.

Very respectfully,
MIDN 1/C Ben Wdowik
Spring 2019 Battalion Commander
Naval Leadership Weekend kicked off with a bang this last Friday, 08 February. At just past 0800 Friday morning, while the majority of the Notre Dame campus slept, bright-eyed midshipmen from across the country poured into the Debartolo Performing Arts Center for a rousing day of motivational talks. As the last midshipman to leave the coffee line quietly shuffled into the auditorium and assumed their seats, the first speaker of the day energetically began: Fleet Master Chief Richard O’Rawe.

O’Rawe opened his speech with a sobering reminder of the history of great power competitions in the world. With China’s meteoric rise to the top of the global economy, and their rapid militarization of the South China Sea, another great power competition seems to be imminent. The second main point that O’Rawe wanted to emphasize was the importance of U.S. Navy sailors. Our job as officers is to keep our enlisted focused and invested primarily in their jobs so that they can become masters of their duties as quickly as possible and we, in turn, can become a better Navy.

Following the wise words of FLTCM O’Rawe was Captain Mountford, formerly of the USS Vincennes. After a brief historical recap of the events that led the USS Vincennes to shoot down an Iranian Airbus passenger plane over the Persian Gulf, Mountford left more than enough food for thought for the multitude of midshipmen present. Among other things, he stressed the importance of training realistically, preparing for every unknown, emphasizing a high standard of professionalism and maintaining technical competence. Above all, CAPT Mountford highlighted the value of courageous followership and daring to (respectfully) question senior leadership in times of confusion and stand up for what we believe in.

Finally, the Junior Officer panel took the floor to round out Friday’s events. Throughout what each junior officer had to say, two main points seemed to stand out: be honest and know yourself. Honesty with both the enlisted below you and the officers above you is the best way to ensure smooth communication and effective execution of the task at hand, while understanding your own leadership style is the key to leading effectively and convincingly. After a day filled with so many nuggets of wisdom and rousing sea stories, it seems safe to say that every midshipmen present slept with vivid dreams of their future careers as Naval officers.

- MIDN 2/C Cyrs
On Saturday, 09 February, the second day of discussions for Naval Leadership Weekend began at 0845 when all midshipmen gathered in order to prepare for the first speaker. Dr. David Lindley from the Notre Dame International Security Center began the day with a discussion on the risks involved in any armed conflict. Within any contest between two countries, there is one ultimate question: who rules? Dr. Lindley proposed that the only way to pursue long lasting peace is a quick and decisive victory, so that the question of who was in power could not be questioned. In situations like this, Dr. Lindley proposed, a country should intervene only if the cost of intervention is worth what they would gain. “It was interesting hearing about the theories behind war and policy from someone who researches that for his career,” MIDN 4/C Elson later commented.

After a brief intermission, Vice Admiral John M. Bird, Retired, began his speech on the topic of the importance of success within leadership. He began by telling the audience about how, though leadership is a lifelong journey, everyone must try to excel at every point. In order to emphasize the importance of our leadership skills even while the midshipmen are junior officers, VADM Bird brought up the collisions involving both the USS Fitzgerald and the USS McCain. These serious events occurred due to a lack of professionalism and failure of leadership with all parties involved. Due to this, all junior officers must work to the best of their ability in order to ensure the safety of themselves and their enlisted. MIDN 4/C McCann later noted, “[h]is talk really emphasized the seriousness of what we will be doing, and the standard we have to follow”.

This discussion was followed by a discussion on the ties between teamwork and leadership from Rear Admiral Jeffrey T. Jablon. RDML Jablon emphasized that either leadership and teamwork will apply to different situations, and it will become necessary to recognize when each one is applicable. In addition, midshipmen must recognize that that they will be the leaders of the enlisted and not their friends. By doing this, each future officer will ensure that their people will accomplish the job that they set out to do.

Finally, Major General Eric T. Fick talked with the midshipmen about the new F-35 fighter jet program. The midshipmen were shown the capabilities and versatility of the new combat platform, and the cooperation necessary for the program to succeed. In addition, Major General Fick shared a lesson that he had learned during his time in the military: make the most of your situation. Since it is unlikely that any officer will always be in the position they prefer, every officer must learn the importance of excelling where they are placed. This ensures that one will be able to develop as a leader and gain the experience needed to get to the position they would want. “The F-35 program definitely got my interest, and I hope to be able to fly it when I commission” stated MIDN 4/C Shyne. With the end of the final talk, the midshipmen gathered, and prepared to make their way to the keynote dinner.
After the Saturday discussions, midshipmen from every university gathered in Notre Dame Stadium for the closing dinner and keynote speaker. The keynote speaker for 2019 was Lieutenant General John F. Sattler, USMC Retired. LtGen Sattler has had a distinguished career within the Marine Corps, including command of I Marine Expeditionary Force. He currently has the Distinguished chair of Leadership and Ethics at the Stockdale Center at the Naval Academy. A key part of his discussion with all attending was the importance of an officer’s relationship with those he or she leads. MIDN 4/C Gannon recalled, “LtGen Sattler kept us all engaged and on our toes when he would randomly call on us all to answer his questions.” By working alongside those you lead rather than only doing the bare minimum, you gain their respect and you can rely on them to accomplish what they need to do. He spoke of his time in Iraq, especially his preparation for the operation in Fallujah. He showed that his strong relationship with his people allowed him the ability to trust them through their loyalty to him. At the end of his discussion, LtGen Sattler reminded the midshipmen to try and make an impact on others every day. With the end of LtGen Sattler’s speech, Father Rocca, the chaplain for all ROTC units, gave the benediction. Following the benediction, the 2019 Navy Leadership Weekend drew to a close. All the midshipmen who attended had learned about leadership and beyond and would apply some of what they had learned in their future careers as Naval Officers. MIDN 4/C Kramer commented, “I enjoyed it overall, and I’m glad I met people from other units!”

-MIDN 4/C Shyne
This year’s panel of speakers left the eagerly gathered MIDN with thoughts that will be sure to stick in all the midshipmen’s minds for years to come and hopefully become integral parts of our leadership philosophies. Fleet Master Chief O’Rawe emphasized the importance of our personal investment in the careers of our sailors, the true weapon of our Navy. Captain Mountford impressed upon those in attendance the importance of speaking up for what we believe in and practicing courageous followership. The JO Panel highlighted the value of honesty and self-awareness as the midshipmen build their reputations and leadership styles as junior officers. As for Saturday’s talks, Rear Admiral Jablon stressed the duality of the role of officers in how they relate to sailors as both a leader and someone they can personally trust. Professor Lindley gave a sobering lecture on the security dilemma and delusion of impartial intervention in international security. Vice Admiral Bird passionately preached on the unacceptability of failure and constant pursuit of excellence. Maj Gen Fick outlined the central importance of personal growth and development throughout one’s career as an officer. Finally, LtGen Sattler reminded everyone of the true meaning of what it is to be a wartime leader. All together, I think I speak for every midshipmen present, when I say that this year’s speakers have already made me a better potential leader and person than I was when I first walked into Jenkins-Nanovic Hall early Friday morning.
14 February, 2019 was far more than just Valentine’s Day for hundreds of Notre Dame students. This year, it also marked the start of the university’s annual men’s boxing tournament, Bengal Bouts. This event, founded by Knute Rockne, aims to raise money to support Holy Cross missions in Bangladesh while simultaneously teaching participating students the principles of amateur boxing.

This year’s Valentine’s Day event ended an incredible season of hard work and began the most exciting tournament in recent memory. The unit was represented by seven boxers, more than double its total from last year. Among them were MIDN 1/C Hoskins, 1/C Wdowik, 2/C Cyrs, 3/C Krivda, 3/C Muller, 4/C Dillon, and OC Duffy.

Hoskins and Wdowik fought valiantly in their first round matches but unfortunately were defeated by heartbreaking split decisions. Cyrs won his first fight unanimously but broke his hand and was forced to take an early exit from the tournament. OC Duffy won his quarterfinal fight by a referee stop contest but hyperextended both elbows and was unable to advance to the next round. Krivda, Muller, and Dillon all won their first two fights to advance to the semifinals but did not advance to the finals.

Overall, this tournament marked the most success that the unit has had in years. With every boxer besides the graduating seniors, Hoskins, and Wdowik, expected to return next year, it is safe to say the future of NROTC boxing is bright.

-MIDN 2/C Cyrs
The third weekend of February marked a very special time for juniors all across the Notre Dame campus as their parents flooded in from around the world to celebrate their beloved children’s growth and development over the years. Students and their parents took part in various dorm events, a touching mass, and a tear-jerking, post-dinner keynote speech by Father John Jenkins.

Yet for our units valued 2/C midshipmen, one of the weekend’s highlights was the ROTC meet and greet in the Wardroom. There, parents were given the opportunity to interact with their children’s shipmates and officers in a relaxed and comfortable setting. Food and drinks were served.

Officers present included: Commander Dittbenner, Lieutenant Van Metre, and Lieutenant Chung. The chance to learn from their hard-won wisdom was invaluable to all parents present. Each set of parents was surely able to walk away with both a better understanding of their children’s lives in ROTC and their future careers as naval officers. Moreover, interactions among parents further strengthened the bonds of midshipmen within the unit.

If one of the purposes for Junior Parents’ Weekend is to show mothers and fathers the lives that their children lead at school, then understanding the ROTC program and knowing the people in it was certainly important for all the midshipmen parents in attendance.

-MIDN 2/C Cyrs
On the weekend of 15 February, seniors from each of the ROTC branches on campus participated in a senior retreat. Retreats are not uncommon on the Notre Dame campus: dorms, clubs, and even academic majors will host them for students involved. This retreat, however, was special; for many, the very first retreat ROTC midshipmen and cadets go on upon arrival at Notre Dame is hosted by ROTC with the Freshmen Retreat, and for many of these seniors, this will be their last. This final retreat, coming full circle, mirrored very closely the initial freshman ROTC event hosted annually. This 24-hour retreat took place at the Moreau Seminary and was full of board games, food, and the all-important culminating dodgeball event. This retreat was not only fun and games during this busy final semester, however. Father Corby assisted those on the retreat in preparation for their imminent commissioning both mentally and spiritually. This retreat served as a time of reflection for these seniors. Looking back over their time at Notre Dame helped them fully appreciate both the good and the bad times they have had, but, more importantly, helped them put into perspective where they want to be as they exit Notre Dame and enter the armed services.

-MIDN 1/C Lillie
From 01 to 03 February 2019, the University of Notre Dame Air Force ROTC hosted the annual Flyin’ Irish Basketball Tournament. The tournament brings together men’s, women’s, and tri-military ROTC teams from around the country. More than 500 players from over 50 different colleges make the journey to the University every year for the basketball tournament.

This year, the Notre Dame Naval ROTC Unit fielded two teams: a men’s Navy team and a men’s and women’s combined team. Overall, there were 40 men’s teams and 10 women’s teams. Notre Dame’s men’s team came out overall in first place during their first pool of games and managed to proceed fairly far in the tournament. Unfortunately, the team was defeated by Texas A&M’s team, who went on to win the tournament.

The tournament was an overall success and proudly continued the 33 year tradition. When asked about how the tournament went, MIDN 3/C Yusko responded that, “[t]he tournament was a great experience and a great opportunity for ROTC overall.” All teams enjoyed their time participating and are starting to think about their teams for the following year.

-MIDN 4/C Shyne
On 22 March, the 1/C midshipmen participated in the annual Dining-in Ceremony. This event, taking place in the Oak room of South Dining Hall, joined together the 1/C midshipmen and staff in an evening that neither group will soon forget. Dining-ins are events with deep history in the Navy. In contrast with dining-outs, in which spouses can be allowed to accompany service-members to the evening, a dining-in is between those in the command alone. This type of event allowed both midshipmen and officers to “let their hair down.” Captain Mark Prokopius served as president of the mess while the charismatic MIDN Hagan valiantly served as Mr. Vice. The president and Mr. Vice ruled the mess with an iron hand, standing for none of the heinous infractions to their rules from midshipmen and officers alike. Amidst the many infractions, punishments ensued as decided by the president and Mr. Vice. The merriment continued with toasts by both midshipmen and officers proud of the Navy, the Marine Corps, and each other. The keynote speaker for the night was USMC Captain Matt Gonzales. His words rang very true with the 1/C midshipmen present. Capt Gonzales spoke of the first few years of his military career and imparted his advice on how we could best conduct the beginnings of our own military careers. With commissioning fast approaching, this night and the speaker’s advice left the 1/C midshipmen excited to enter the Navy and Marine Corps. Armed with butterbars and can-do attitudes, the world will tremble in our wake.

- MIDN 1/C Lillie M
On the morning of 30 April 2019, over 500 runners lined up on McCourtney Quad on campus to take part in the 5th Run Forrest Run 5k and 10k. The quad was filled with a display of 900 American flags. All of the people gathered together for this event, organized by Notre Dame’s ROTC service groups in conjunction with the Gary Sinise Foundation. GSF is named after Sinise, who played Lieutenant Dan in the movie “Forrest Gump.” The foundation supports defenders, veterans, first responders, their families, and those in need. The funds raised specifically at the run benefit the Restoring Independence Supporting Empowerment program which builds custom homes to fit the needs of wounded veterans and their families. The guest speaker for the event was Army Major Jeremy Haynes.

Overall, the Run Forrest Run was a remarkable success thanks to the efforts of: the ROTC midshipmen and cadets, University and local volunteers, and Gary Sinise Foundation involvement. MIDN 4/C Aidan Dillon said of the event, “It was a pretty surreal experience seeing everyone work together to put on such an awesome event.” From setting up flags in the display to checking in runners to color guard at the event, the Notre Dame Navy ROTC battalion worked hard to make the event successful and a tribute to the men and women it honored.

- MIDN 4/C Gannon
“I just kept on running because it was beautiful out. I really didn’t slow down so I did pretty well,” commented MIDN 4/C Brady. This reaction may be echoed by the 1700 runners coming from the Notre Dame, Saint Mary's College, and Holy Cross College campuses on 06 April 2019. Similar to years past, it was a runner’s day; the weather was warm and sunny with a slight breeze. Currently in its 15th consecutive year, the Holy Half Marathon is one of the largest student-organized events at the University of Notre Dame.

According to MIDN 4/C Brennan Ralph, “I felt awesome running today. It started my day off right.” The event encourages goal-setting, personal drive, and good fitness levels for all participants. The intensity of a half-marathon coupled with a gorgeous campus and lots of cheering help make the race a positive experience for all the runners.

The Holy Half has truly become one of the greatest traditions at the University of Notre Dame. Runners take pride not only in training for and completing a 13.1-mile race, but also in making a difference to South Bend on behalf of the University. The race, which was originally started as a means of fundraising for Hurricane Katrina relief, has now shifted its focus to supporting local organizations. This year, the proceeds of the race will go to the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Program of St. Joseph County and Education Bridge. With many beneficiaries, from the runners to the organizations, the 15th annual Holy Half Marathon was a huge success, and will hopefully continue to be so for many years to come.

- MIDN 4/C Gannon
The Commander’s Cup is a year-long, tri-military competition held between Notre Dame’s Air Force, Army, and Navy ROTC. The Cup typically consists of three events: football in the fall, basketball in the winter, and soccer in the spring. Games are played in a round-robin style, with points awarded to the winner of each game. At the end of the academic year, the branch with the most cumulative points gets to take home the coveted Commander’s Cup trophy during the spring’s Pass in Review. Overall, the tournament is a competitive event between cadets and midshipmen, as well as a source of pride for the commanders of each respective unit. In this competition, bragging rights are something that last for years.

The 2018-2019 Commander’s Cup was one of the most exciting editions in recent memory. In the fall, Navy swept both Army and Air Force in football, in large part due to the efforts of their recently acquired star wide receiver OC Duffy. Each ROTC unit captured a game in the winter season’s basketball but Navy managed to stay just ahead of Army due to the combination of experience and young firepower brought to bear by MIDN 1/C Hagan, MIDN 3/C Yusko, and MIDN 4/C Ralph. In soccer, Navy lost a heartbreaker to Army by a single goal. Needing a win against Air Force to remain tied with Army, the unit leaned heavily on MIDN 1/C Palmier, Hoskins, and Navotas to dispatch of Air Force and force a tie-breaker with Army. After much deliberation between the commanders of each ROTC unit, volleyball was selected to be the deciding competition and a title match between Navy and Army was set up. Urged on by the spirit of their warrior predecessors and driven by an unquenchable desire to write their names in the record books, the midshipmen of Notre Dame ROTC finally prevailed in a grueling volleyball match to take home the glory. Bravo Zulu to a hard-fought victory!

-MIDN 2/C Cyrs
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