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English 110: Intro to Composition

12 February 2018

Being a Marine

“Congratulations you are now a United States Marine. Welcome to the brotherhood.” My drill instructor said these words to me as he placed my Eagle, Globe, and Anchor in my Hand. This all happened in front of the Iwo Jima monument on Paris Island, South Carolina where tens of thousands of young men and women go every year to earn the title United States Marine. Looking back, this along with the four years that followed would be some of the most important of my life.

It is interesting to me now to look back and think about how three months drastically changed me for the rest of my life and how in four years I could learn so much. My journey started on November 04, 2013. This was the day I went to boot camp. I was quickly introduced to drill instructors yelling in my face and countless push-ups. Marine Corps boot camp is broken down into three phases. The first phase is when the drill instructors try to break us down and weed out the weak recruits. This is the phase where I as an individual learned how much I could really take mentally. Discipline was drilled into my body, but I would not be broken. I quickly decided I would take whatever the drill instructors could dish out.

Second Phase is where the drill instructors started to build us up. I spent a lot of time getting to know my M16A4 service rifle inside and out. I named it Sheila. In this phase, I also spent a lot of time learning about the Marine Corps’ illustrious history. I learned about the

courageous Marines that came before me. This for me was the most important phase of boot camp because this is where I started to understand what it truly meant to be a Marine.

Third Phase is where the drill instructors fine-tune us into the lean green fighting machines we were to become. In third phase, the recruits must pass one final test in order to earn the title United States Marine. It's called the Crucible and it was three days (fifty-four hours to be exact) of being sleep deprived. Where I and all the other recruits hiked a total of forty-eight miles. We were broken down into squads (eight man teams) and then tested in multiple events throughout the fifty-four-hour period, taking everything that we had learned and putting it to use.

Thereafter completing boot camp, I attended my Military Occupational Specialty School or MOS school for short. There is where I learned how to be a Logistics/ Embarkation specialist. This is also, where I got my first taste of what it is like to be a leader. In MOS school, we were all put into platoons (a group of marines) according to when we were scheduled to leave. I was assigned the position of guide, which, is the leader of the platoon. That meant it was my responsibility to make sure everyone was where they were supposed to be as well as, having accountability of them at all times. In all honesty, I hated it, but it was necessary in helping me grow as a leader and as a person.

Towards the end of MOS school, I volunteered to be sent to Okinawa, Japan for two years. For me it was a no brainer I always wanted to live in Japan. Plus, that was where all the fun deployment exercises were. It was well worth it. Those two years were some of the best and worst days of my life. I had a blast experiencing the local culture. I ate a lot of Ramen but I also worked some very long hours. I got to visit the Philippines, Thailand, and Guam. This was really the place where I feel I became a great leader. I was given the unique, though some would say unfortunate, opportunity of working at the headquarters for all the Logistics regiments in

Okinawa. It was kind of like being thrown to the slaughter. There I was, a brand new logistician and I was already working at the top with the big wigs or more precisely for the big wigs. I had to learn quickly and adapt. This for me was a positive experience. It taught me to rely on myself to solve problems. After about nine months, I was given three subordinates to help me out. I had to teach and mentor them so they could do the same job as me in my absence. I was also responsible for their well-being. If they needed something or if they had a problem, it was my responsibility to take care of it.

After being stationed in Japan for two years, I was sent to Oceanside, California where I would complete my four-year contract with the Marine Corps. Once again, I was given the unique opportunity of working at the headquarters, but this time for all the Grunt regiments. These are the people that actually go to combat. This was a very humbling experience for me. At this point, I was riding pretty high on my noble steed of confidence. I think I was a little bit too cocky. There I learned I still had a lot to learn about the Marine Corps as well as life in general. I pushed through though and I always got the job done.

Overall, I gained a lot of experience as well as a plethora of knowledge from the Marine Corps about life, and about myself. I worked hard and I played hard. I bled, I shed tears, and I met some amazing people along the way. I learned what it meant to be a leader and how far I could push myself. The most important thing I gained from those four years though was the title United States Marine.