

Jour 199 Matthew Haufe

Sarah Gattone ROTC Interview

Q. Can you start talking about how you decided to choose to go into NROTC?

- A. It started by me wanting to go to the naval academy. And when I did not get accepted, I was thankful I could fall back on my NROTC scholarship. I chose NROTC because I wanted to serve in the armed forces because it felt like the right thing to do. If you asked me now I still wouldn't really have an answer, I just felt called. I joined navy because each of the different services have different personalities, and the personality of the navy fit me better and also because my parents were naval officers. I was crushed at the time for not getting into the naval academy, but now it's okay because I'm with my unit here and I've gotten very close with them.

Q. What were some of your thoughts/ perceptions of the program as you were coming in?

- A. That's gonna be a hard one to answer because right off the bat they put us through a week of hell and they over exaggerate everything that NROTC is. So we showed up a week [before classes started] and it was called NSO. We slept in the Armory in army cots, and we ate in different classrooms. So they would be screaming at us and would usher us around. What's funny is they would yell at us to go faster so we would run but then they would yell at us to not run so it was like "MOVE FASTER", "STOP RUNNING", "MOVE FASTER", and it was super confusing and that was the point was to frustrate us. And we had physical training in the mornings and we took our physical readiness test the second day and nearly all of us failed because we were super dehydrated. That was another problem because they told us "Stay hydrated" but would only let us drink every 45 minutes and they would yell "sip, don't chug or you'll puke" so it was very frustrating. We all had some massive blisters at the end of the week. They kept on assuring us that this is not really what it's like, but rather show us what life is like for the people you'll be leading because that is what life is like the Navy enlisted people do, where they scream nonstop. If you do something wrong they make you do extra work. So leading into it was like what did I sign up for, and what comforted me was knowing that NSO was the worst of it and thankfully that was true. Overall it was really fun though, so at the end of it everyone was like "oh my god thank god it's over" but then you're like I kind of got used to it. The screaming started to roll off your back, and I said so much stupid crap you can ask the upperclassmen about. It's much slower in reality than in NSO but it's still demanding.

Q. So that first week was a big time, all day everyday commitment right at the beginning?

- A. Oh yeah, we slept in the armory, we ate in the armory, we sat in on briefs in the armory. The day started at 4:45 [in the morning] when they would start screaming and everyone would scramble to put bandaids and shoes on and hair in buns. Then we would go to physical training and ate and did more training and it was a ton of stuff. Then lights out was officially 10:00 p.m. But then they always gave us so much stuff to get done that we would listen for them to leave so we could polish our boots and fix our uniforms and such, so we got very little sleep.

Q. Going into that did you expect the time commitment for the first week?

- A. I wasn't expecting the screaming, but I was expecting a lot of hard work. The screaming kind of helped in some ways because you're sleeping in a cot in the armory and you're super exposed and all of a sudden you hear screaming and a siren and the adrenaline helped. That first week was insane.

Q. Has the time commitment lightened up at all after that or is it still a big part of your day?

- A. It's still a very big time commitment. I, at last t the moment, am unable to join any RSO's solely because most of them practice or rehearse on weekdays and the only time I'm available are weekends and even that can get a little dicey. Especially now because we are working on getting all of our uniform components so were running around yo the dry cleaners and the tailor and all that stuff. My days still generally start around 5 in the morning and don't end until after midnight on some nights. As freshman there's also a program called FDP (Freshman development program) every wednesday night where they catch us up on naval etiquette and knowledge because generally you don't want to learn it all slowly because there's so much to learn so you just cram it all in the beginning and add on it from there. I don't even know why I signed up but I now also have an hour long time commitment on mondays called command school. This program gets together with other midshipmen who signed up and they discuss different leadership aspects within the battalion and we go through scenarios that may or may not be true and discuss how to handle them to build our own leadership style. It's a lot a sa freshman and I think it will get easier as I progress through college because a of tight now freshman also have to accumulate six hours of mandatory study hours in the classroom by end of business on friday. Theres also physical training on Tuesday and thursday morning. Drill team practice monday and wednesday morning. There's tailgates we have to go to and then after home football games we have to go clean up the stands, which sucks. It really is a big time commitment yet I still sign on for more stuff.

Q. Going in did you think you were going to be able to join any RSO's? Or were you aware of the fact that it was going to take up a lot of your time?

A. I was aware that it was unlikely i would be able to join any RSO's, but I was told by an upperclassman that the unit encourages us to participate in RSO's and they can be flexible if it's something you really want to do. But if they say it's something you can do if you really want to they mean don't do it we don't want to do the paperwork. I wanted to join at least one RSO but it just hasn't worked out. They're already trying to instill the idea that the needs of the navy come before your personal needs o interests. I am used to playing in a band and singing in acapella groups and doing musical theatre but I just flat out don't have time anymore which sucks but there will be time for that after the navy.

Q. Do you think they kind of tell you that you can join an RSO but really it's unrealistic because of the time commitment?

A. No, they say if you really want it to work you would make it work. It's just me personally the things I like to do are very big time commitments. It's not like the Harry Potter association where you meet once every two weeks and everything else is per email. They don't eld you to believe that you can participate in a ton of extracurriculars, they just make it clear that if you want to you can make it work. It's just in my case with my classes that i'm taking it just doesn't work this semester. Im hoping that changes next year because I won't have to do the mandatory study hours anymore which take up a lot of time. But no, they didn't mislead me in any way, I know what I signed up for.