

# Newsletter Fall

## 2020

### CWU Army ROTC

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2020 has been an unusual year in many ways, and it has been an unusual year for ROTC training as well. Due to Advanced Camp being canceled, rising MS4 Cadets had to complete alternative training (OAL) in the Fall. COVID-19 Restrictions also limited the amount of in person training Cadets were able to conduct. Despite these challenges, Cadets were able to use their resilience and flexibility to adapt and continue to train!

This Fall Newsletter will dive into the experiences of some of the Cadets that went through training this quarter, and will give insight into how the Wildcat Battalion has adapted to COVID-19.



**FTX Experience – MS2, CDT Tom Sturgeon**

Despite the difficult setbacks of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Wildcat Battalion has found ways to persevere and excel through these challenging times. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Cadre and upperclassmen, Fall FTX at the Yakima Training Center provided a unique opportunity for myself and my fellow Cadets a fantastic way to apply our classroom learning into a field setting for practical development and refinement.

After spending the majority of the quarter in a remote learning environment, it has been difficult to get to know my squadmates and the new members of the program. Thanks to the FTX experience, I was able to bond with my squad members outside of our biweekly in person labs and got to connect with each individual.



At our first day of FTX, the MSII were paired with an MSI for land navigation iterations which not only helped me develop my intermediate map reading abilities, but also aided in assisting the new members of the battalion build confidence in their map reading abilities. As the first true guidance role that I've taken during my time in the battalion, I was constantly tapping into examples of leadership displayed by my peers from previous quarters and how their methods were effective in teaching land navigation. Keeping a calm mind and remembering simple tricks such as pace count, properly plotting coordinates and being able to correctly identify key terrain features allowed me to work together with my battle buddy and answer any of his/her questions during our training exercises.

Over the course of the next few days, I was able to stay within close proximity of the MS3s during their assigned lanes, and I was able to observe their actions and thought processes when developing courses of action for different objectives. Having this opportunity to observe and participate in different platoon movements gave me a great real world example of the teachings from lectures stretching back to my freshman year. After days of participating in these platoon movements, it felt as if all the puzzle pieces were finally falling into place. Asking clarifying questions with the MSIV TACs and the MSIIIs helped me grow my own knowledge which will help me give advice to my peers and prepare me for my future years in the ROTC program. Witnessing the developing leaders, asking

questions and drawing connections between lectures and field training all helped me become more aware of the intricacies of leading a platoon.

Following each day of training, our squad leaders would hold a community meeting and debrief the events of the day and ask probing questions. These sessions allowed me to understand gaps in other teammates' knowledge and I was able to observe how senior members of the program addressed these challenges and offered guidance. During these sessions, I personally learned how to field strip an M4, gained a new understanding of the use of radio pro-words and clarified the steps of a platoon raid.

Fall FTX allowed me to practice my skills learned up to this point in my ROTC career as well as gaining new knowledge from spending time around my peers and picking up as much information as I could. Despite the setbacks of 2020 and the challenges presented during FTX, I could confidently rely on my peers to support one another and accomplish the goals of the FTX.



### **Operational Agile Leader – MS4 CDT Gwendolyn Cavalier**

While we were dealing with the Novel Corona Virus's effects, which forced Central Washington University to conduct classes online, the Wildcat Battalion's mission remained in sight - to develop courageous leaders to reach their full potential. Because our summer plans to attend Cadet Summer Training (CST) at Fort Knox, KY, were canceled, we all had to shift right and train in a decentralized capacity. The Wildcat Battalion conducted the MS4 Crucible a couple of weeks before the start of SY20-21 to validate and re-integrate the soldier's common

tasks and get us prepared for branching accessions into the US Army.

The MS4 Crucible was a four-day event that tested our physical agility, intellectual capacities, and leadership aptitudes. The events consisted of the record Army Physical Fitness Test and height/weight, land navigation both written and practical test, 12-mile ruck march, CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear) class and practical test, Tactical Combat Casualty Care class and practical test, Call for Fire class and practical test, Blue Card Instructional class and practical test, general knowledge test, and finally ending with our Platoon Situational Training Exercise (STX) Evaluation. The Platoon STX was the culminating event that allowed us to demonstrate our leadership capabilities, self-awareness, and intellect. These four-days were intense and grueling that prepared us for what was coming next, Operation Agile Leader.

Operation Agile Leader (OAL) was the answer to our long-anticipated question of, "Are we going to CST this summer?" OAL was enacted in place of CST at Fort Knox, KY, in order to mitigate the risks of spreading the Novel Corona Virus, which was detrimental to the welfare of our forces. OAL allowed each ROTC Battalions to take on the responsibilities to train and certify rising MS4 Cadets of the requirements needed for Basic Officer Leadership Course-A that would have otherwise been part of CST.



OAL was also a four-day event that consisted of four missions per day, ambush, movement to contact, platoon area defense, and raid. It was designed for each Cadet to serve in squad and platoon leadership positions under stress to assess our leadership attributes using the Army Leadership Requirement Model (ALRM). At the



end of each mission, Cadets received formal leader assessments through counselings using ALRM standards or what we call the "Blue Cards" in order to gain confidence in our leadership abilities for future leadership positions that will require us to plan, resource, and execute future Field Training Exercises (FTX) and events for the MS I to MS III Cadets.

The Wildcat Battalion partnered with other ROTC Schools within the 8th Brigade consisting of the University of Washington-Seattle, Pacific Lutheran University, and Seattle University, to conduct the Joint Field Exercise Training Event named TF West at Joint Base Lewis McChord, which was held at the beginning of the Fall Quarter. TF West FTX was rigorous in and of itself and added more challenges to synchronized teamwork with other ROTC Cadets. I believe that we executed this mission outstandingly, which led to our Cadet Battalion Commander, c/LTC Madison Chinco, to be recognized as the #1 Cadet for the TF West FTX.



### **Prior Service FTX Experience – CDT Pierre Lawrence**

As a prior service Non-commissioned Officer (NCO) I consider myself to be well accustomed to field training exercises (FTXs). During my tenure as an active duty enlisted soldier, I logged countless hours participating in field training exercises and external evaluations (EXEVALs). These events usually serve to provide a means of solidifying concepts learned in weekly leader's time training

sessions (LTT). This model begins with instructional LTT sessions which provide soldiers with a refresher on various concepts they may not have covered in a long time and provides the opportunity for junior NCOs to practice training soldiers at different levels (seniors, peers and subordinates). Practical experience and evaluations are then provided via FTXs and EXEVALs.



As I participated in the ROTC program and the Fall FTX, I was able to observe a similar model being utilized. We began with detailed classroom sessions (via Microsoft Teams) which introduced various concepts. These concepts were solidified by fortnightly lab sessions which provided a means of performing the movements previously learned. This culminated into the Fall FTX which acted as a sort of EXEVAL for the MS3 Cadets. We were able to demonstrate our knowledge and understanding of the concepts and roles we learned throughout the quarter. It also provided the MS4 population with the opportunity to evaluate and coach subordinates and practice creating training events.

FTXs are costly but necessary endeavors and, as such, time management and planning are critical. This FTX was well planned as every moment of the day seemed to be properly accounted for. There did not seem to be any unnecessary downtime as we transitioned from scenario to hot-wash time and time again. We also did not seem to go too far off track after having issues with misplaced equipment on some lanes. The organization and execution of this FTX made the intent clear. In all the other FTXs that I have

participated in, you are fully immersed from the moment you arrive on site to the moment you start tearing down tents prior to leaving. This is meant to stress a soldier and test their responses to various factors which may be present in combat.

The ROTC Fall FTX was meant to be more of a vehicle for learning as Cadets were provided with detailed, individual scenarios for each engagement as opposed to an overarching mission with various, random events thrown in. Cadets were able to prepare for the scenarios provided while under stress and then react in the manner they thought best. The hot wash conducted after each engagement provided a break and the opportunity to receive feedback and reset prior to the next engagement. This FTX was a great change of pace for me. As an NCO, I have never overseen a platoon sized element for any kind of tactical movement. This FTX provided the opportunity for me to move past simply contributing to the plan and actually creating and leading the execution of the plan. The gravity of this seemingly small difference becomes apparent once that leadership position is assumed.

In closing, this Fall FTX provided us with many great takeaways. This FTX was a well-planned exercise that met the intent of creating a learning environment which was conducive to the development of each Cadet involved. The intensity was high enough that each Cadet had the feeling of making decisions in a high stress environment but breaks and rotations between each scenario/engagement ensured that Cadets were not overwhelmed and were able to reset each time. I look forward to the next FTX and have the full confidence that it will also prove to be an engaging and fulfilling experience. On a more personal note, this was the first FTX in a long time where I did not have to sleep in a tent and that's always a good thing.



## Compression Cadet Experience, and Training Through Injury – CDT Maddie Hadden

This year has been different in many ways and has challenged me mentally and physically. With each challenge I have been able to better myself and so have my peers. Joining the Army ROTC program this year has allowed me to meet the most hardworking and determined young adults at Central. The Battalion has been able to preserve under these difficult conditions because of our strong leaders. As a sophomore in college that is a compression Cadet, strong leaders have been essential to my experience and growth in lecture and out in the field. Because I have my first and second year compressed together, it has been a lot of new information in a short amount of time.



Due to COVID regulations creating our online environment, I have still been able to meet my fellow first-year and second-year Cadets and acquire a great education of military science. During our COVID-19 experience, I have found that, like many compression Cadets, asking your peers and cadre questions no matter how simplistic you might think they are is the golden ticket. During FTX, I had to be a quick thinker for first- year Cadets as well as know what subjects I still needed help on.

It's challenging to be a compression Cadet, but you get the best of both worlds. The Land Navigation course was a great opportunity for me as a compression Cadet to be able to work alongside some of my first-year peers and practice what we had learned in class, as well as also show more of a



leadership role as an MSII by being paired with an MSI. I was very excited to get to meet more of my fellow Cadets in all years and learn from them and get to know them more. Being in an online environment does have some perks, but you miss out on being able to learn and spend time with your peers on a daily basis.

An experience during FTX as a compression Cadet I will never forget was being able to be a Radio Telephone Operator(RTO) for the MSIII's tactical operations and movement techniques that they were graded on. I got to experience the pressure they were put under, as well as the guidance they received from the fours and mostly learn what an RTO's role is. By the end of FTX, I had a better understanding of the flow and set up of tactical operations because I got to work close by the PL and PSG's and understand what is to be expected of you in that leadership role. I believe this was crucial for my education and compression year.

Like many people, 2020 had it's setbacks. I broke my collarbone in September and had to be in a sling during Fall FTX. I had a lot of people ask me why I was even going due to my injury, but 2020 hasn't been kind to most and I have had to learn to make the best out of any situation. My situation was to have one free arm and experience FTX with my peers and learn while having a great time or sit back and watch this opportunity pass me by. With an injury, it is easy to use it as an excuse and let chances like these pass you by, but I refused to not let my collarbone keep me from doing what my peers could. Albeit, I didn't get to fully experience the five mile ruck that we did, but I saw how hard my peers worked and how they refused to give up even with blisters, sore feet, rolled ankles, and an extra thirty pounds on their backs. They inspired me and I look forward to many more events and years with them!

