

THE RECOIL

EXCELSIOR BATTALION

FALL 2020

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Greetings Excelsior Battalion Family,

I am extremely proud of all our Cadets, from the battalion commander to the newest team member. This has not been the easiest semester to be a leader or follower, but the Cadets did a wonderful job. The historical challenge of planning and executing across six universities was made even more challenging by the hybrid learning environment forced on us by COVID-19.

Innovative and Resilient; two traits exhibited throughout the battalion. Although the Class of 2021 has not had a traditional senior year, they will have an experience unlike any before them that will better prepare them for military service. It was easy for me to have confidence in their abilities as 5 out of 19 seniors were selected as Distinguished Military Graduates (CDTs Rachel Cary, Chris Koch, Isaac McCurdy, Claire Ramirez, and Megan Unrath) and one earning a spot in the Top 10% of Active Duty selected Cadets (CDT Claire Ramirez).

For those that might not know, a new veterans organization launched on Veteran's Day here at Cornell; Cornell Military Network. This is a university-wide alumni organization for military-affiliated Cornellians. If you would like to know more, visit their website.

I hope everyone has an enjoyable holiday season. The holidays can be a rough time for some, which will be made only worse through COVID-19 isolation. If you need someone to reach out to and don't know where to look, contact us here at Cornell Army ROTC. If you are worried about a loved one, don't be afraid to reach out to them or us for assistance.

LTC James Tully



Welcoming New Cadre

MAJ Ficchi

Major Stephen L. Ficchi commissioned in 2007 from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and was assigned to the Field Artillery Branch. After commissioning he entered active duty as a 2nd Lieutenant serving as a Squad Tactical Officer for Leader's Training Course at Fort Knox before completing the Field Artillery Basic Officer Leaders course at Fort Sill Oklahoma.

His assignments include Company Fire Support Officer in Bravo Company, 1st Battalion 87th Infantry Regiment; Fire Direction Officer, Platoon Leader and Battery Executive Officer Alpha Battery, 3rd Battalion 6th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum New York; Squadron Fire Support Officer for 6th Squadron 8th Cavalry Regiment and Bravo Battery Commander in 1st Battalion 76th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart Georgia; Squadron Fire Support Officer and Live Fire Division Observer Controller/Trainer at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk Louisiana; Battalion Fire Support Officer, 1st Battalion 7th Special Forces Group Airborne, Eglin Air Force Base Florida; Brigade Fire Support Officer and Battalion Operations Officer 2nd Battalion 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Alaska.

Major Ficchi's deployments include one tour to Iraq in support of operation Iraqi Freedom and three tours to Afghanistan, two in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and one in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal (3rd award), Meritorious Service Medal (2nd Award), Army Commendation Medal (3rd award), Army Achievement Medal (3rd Award), Valorous Unit Award, and Meritorious Unit Citation. Major Ficchi is married to Tahrin Ficchi and they have three children.

Mr. Michael Oddo

I first joined the U.S. Army in October 1977 through the delayed entry program. The day after I graduated from high school, I entered active duty as a 12B Combat Engineer and conducted my Basic Training at Fort Leonard Wood, MO. After Basic Training I was stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas with the 43rd Combat Engineer Company, 3rd ARC (Armored Cavalry Regiment) and served there for 3 years. When my contract was up, I worked several entry-level, low paying jobs in Houston, TX, and Oklahoma City, OK.

I figured out that without an education, I was not going to make a decent living. I returned to New York State and worked construction for a little over a year. I applied for the Equal Opportunity Program and was accepted into SUNY Oswego to pursue a career in education as a Technology Teacher. I completed the program and accepted a position as a Civil Engineering Technician at the Cortland County Highway Department in 1988. I worked there for 2 ½ years and left to continue my education at SUNY Plattsburg where I earned a M.S. in Special Education. It was during this time I re-enlisted in the Army and served as an assistant instructor. I was offered a seat at the 98th Division Drill Sergeant School and became a Drill Sergeant in 1994. I remained a Drill Sergeant for 8 years. I trained Basic Combat Training (BCT) and Engineer One Station Unit Training (OSUT) in Fort Leonard Wood, MO and Fort Knox, KY. I also had the privilege to teach Basic Marksmanship Training (BRM) to West Point Cadets.

In 1994, I also found a job teaching at Ithaca BOCES as a teacher for students with severe emotional disabilities for a couple years. I then took a job at Oswego Free Academy in 1997 as a Pre - Engineering Teacher. This is where I met my wife Andrea and I remained for 24 years in the position. I was fortunate to have a very supportive school district administration that let me continue to serve in the Army Reserves. The more rank I was given the more time from work and family I had to take. I was promoted to Command Sergeant Major (CSM) in 2009 and served as the CSM of 479th EN BN, (Fort Drum), 365th EN BN (Schuylkill, PA), 485th EN BN (Johnstown, PA) and as the provisional CSM of the 411th EN BDE.

Note from CDT Battalion Commander - CDT Claire Ramirez

Greetings Excelsior Battalion Cadets, friends, family, and supporters;

What a semester! Though things have looked a bit different over the past few months; as this issue shows, Cornell Army ROTC Cadets continue to push forward and adapt our plans to meet an ever-changing reality. I am so proud of what our Cadets have accomplished and continue to accomplish this year. Every obstacle we tackle is a new lesson in mission planning, problem-solving, and adaptable leadership. I am so grateful for the effort and unwavering motivation of our younger Cadets, the support and assistance from MS3 and MS4 leadership, and the advice and advocacy from our cadre staff.

Thank you to all of you who continue to support the Excelsior Battalion. As I approach graduation this May and prepare to commission, it becomes more and more clear that the reach of our program goes far beyond our Cadets. Through the advice of alumni, messages from our local veterans, training with our fellow Navy, Air Force, and Marine Cadets and midshipmen, and kind words and contributions from friends and family, it is evident our successes are more than just our own.

To all of our MS1, MS2, and MS3 Cadets, I look forward to watching you all continue to grow and expect big things for our battalion in the years to come. To my fellow MS4s, let's finish out our final semester strong! What an honor it has been to serve you all as battalion commander this semester. I wish a happy and safe holiday season, and I look forward to seeing many of you next semester!



COVID-19 + Excelsior Battalion

This Fall, Excelsior Battalion Cadets adapted to a challenging semester in the time of COVID-19. We took it in stride, planning events and training that were socially distant, but would still provide Cadets with valuable experiences. We separated our Battalion into 3 PT “pods” that met at different spots on campus throughout the week. Each pod, socially distant and safe, only interacted with each other, allowing us to PT on our normal schedule while maintaining COVID-19 precautions.

Despite everything going on, our battalion met all of its training objectives, executing our fall FTX, labs, land navigation, and much more. This included a diagnostic ACFT and multiple early morning ruck marches (needless to say, keeping our spacing was especially important this semester). Meanwhile, our MS classes attended hybrid classes, and battalion staff conducted virtual meetings each week. Our satellite Cadets probably didn't miss all of the travel to and from Ithaca, so Zoom might be here to stay. All in all, our battalion managed to not only stay afloat during the pandemic - we excelled.

CDT Burley '22 - Experience with COVID-19 & National Guard

My name is CDT Malachi Burley. I'm from Baltimore, Maryland and am currently a junior at Ithaca College studying Sociology with 3 minors in education, counseling, and politics! I am an MSIII within Cornell's AROTC program while simultaneously serving within the Army National Guard as a 11B infantryman with the enlisted rank of PFC.

I have been on active-duty orders with the Army National Guard since late May 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and for the vast majority of my time on mission I have worked at COVID-19 testing facilities in both Buffalo and Binghamton, NY. Over the course of the last 8 months, I have worked with many soldiers, medical staff, and other front-line workers in ensuring easy, quick, and efficient access to COVID-19 testing for the public. I have seen the constant evolution and quick adaptation to all new developments/guidelines pushed out by the CDC, implemented into all of our procedures to reduce any and all possibility of a COVID-19 outbreak on site. The Army National Guard has a profound presence and actively works with other state departments such as NYS Homeland Security and Department of Health cohesively in creating as well as maintaining the functioning of all drive through testing facilities in the state of New York.

Though it has been difficult working full-time while also taking 20 credits online this semester, my professors at Ithaca College, as well as my incredible MS3 instructors SFC Bonham and MAJ Pasto, have been amazing in their understanding and accommodation of the present situation. Everyone else here on mission at the test site is also very supportive in helping me make time to attend class and work simultaneously. I can honestly say that without this amazing support system surrounding me, this semester would have been a thousand times more difficult and the amount of love as well as appreciation I have for everyone who has and continues to support me is limitless.

Now as we move into the year 2021, we are doing so with a vaccine and moving forward with the test sites possibly incorporating a vaccination lane along with our testing lanes. There is a definitive light at the end of the tunnel for us all! But for now, I'll be right here at the Binghamton test site, so please stop by, say hi, and maybe participate in a little nasal swabbing while you're at it! (P.S. It's actually not that bad, you get used to it.) Please stay safe everyone and continue to be incredible, or should I say EXCELSIOR!!!



Cadet Spotlight

CDT Koch '21



After Advanced Camp and CTLT were cancelled, I had no idea what to do with my summer. It was too late to apply for an internship, and most would be remote anyway. While I was trying to decide how to make the most out of the situation we were in, I received a call from a friend who had just graduated from Cornell. He was interested in riding a bike across the country. At first I was hesitant, but after some careful planning, I concluded that it was not only possible, but a great idea. Because we would be sleeping outside practically every night, away from people, it seemed like the perfect socially distanced trip to take. So on June 02, we took off from the Southern tip of Brooklyn NY, headed west.

After the initial excitement of this grand adventure wore off, we began to realize the magnitude of what we signed ourselves up for. The rolling mountainous terrain of the Delaware Water Gap area and Pennsylvania took its toll on us. Building up our miles over that first week, we went to sleep and woke up physically beat down. But before we realized it, the mountains flattened out and we were flying through the Midwest, hitting days of 90-100 miles through Ohio and Indiana until reaching Chicago.

From there, we made our way north into unexplored territory. We rode through beautiful Wisconsin farmland up along the Mississippi River Valley until we reached Minneapolis. All throughout the Midwest, we ran into some of the kindest, most hospitable people imaginable. With the lack of campgrounds or public land, we had to rely on the kindness of strangers to find places to sleep (usually a backyard or barn).

Moving west, we rode from the land of lakes to the quiet prairies of North Dakota and Eastern Montana. Though there was a quiet beauty associated with the sparseness of the prairies, we were thrilled to hit the massive wall of the Rockies after 38 days of monotonous pedaling. In one day, the scenery completely transformed from dry flat grasslands to raging rivers, evergreens, and sharp peaks reaching over 10,000 feet.

If I could point to one experience on this trip that stood out, it would be riding the "Going to the Sun Road" in Glacier National Park. We arrived just days before they opened the road up to cars for the summer (this road gets up to 80 feet of snow in the winter), so we had the road to ourselves. We climbed above the treeline and enjoyed views of the most stunning scenery I've ever seen in my life — without the burden of crowds, cars, or noise pollution.

As we continued our trek from Montana to Idaho and finally Washington, people started saying "congratulations." It finally dawned on us that this adventure was ending. Soon there would be no more "west" to go. It felt strange. After almost 50 days on the road, that became the new normal. Waking up to a beautiful sunrise, packing up my life into a small bag, and taking off awaiting whatever new experience awaited us that day.

Waking up the next morning, we rode the last 60 miles, smelling the sea once again, and dipped our bikes into the Pacific. With less than one year until I commission, this opportunity gave me ample time to think, reflect, and marvel at the beauty, diversity, and kindness of people all across the United States.



Training Events—Fall 2020

Operation Agile Leader

Typically, Cadets attend Advanced Camp between their junior and senior year as a way to demonstrate their leadership skills they have learned in their first three years of ROTC. However, due to COVID-19, our Cadets instead attended Operation Agile Leader (OAL), a shortened version of Advanced Camp. They flew on a Chinook to Fort Drum to start their ten day training event with other Cadets from Syracuse and Clarkson. In these jam-packed days, Cadets participated in day and night land navigation, qualified on the M4, went on a 6-mile ruck, and finished off the week with a four day Field Training Exercise (FTX). During this FTX, every Cadet got a chance to be Platoon Leader (PL) or Platoon Sergeant (PSG) and were graded on their performance. Our MSIVs will complete a 12-mile ruck in the spring, which is their last requirement for OAL.

Chinook ride to OAL

Pictured: MSIV Cadets



Field Training

Through hard work and flexibility, we were able to conduct each of our standard training events. While practicing proper social distancing and COVID-19 guidelines, we completed our weekend FTX in September, learned squad tactics at the October Superlab, practiced land navigation, and performed platoon tactics at the November Superlab. To further mitigate risk, we divided up squads based on schools, while also separating the MSIIIs from the underclassmen at each event. The feedback from the Cadets was overwhelmingly positive, with the MSIs appreciating the more deliberate instruction, the MSIIIs enjoying more opportunities for leadership, and the MSIIIs executing missions at a faster pace. This is just one example of how COVID-19 has forced us to try new things, many of which we will continue to do even after the pandemic.



First formation before the start of Superlab 2 in November



2020 OAL/Field Training Pictures



Fall 2020 Photo Book

PT Challenges

This semester, Cornell Army ROTC participated in three PT Challenges with our Brigade. Each PT challenge allowed us to compete with the other programs while still safely social distancing. The first PT challenge occurred in the summer for 4th of July. As a Brigade, we were able to raise \$1,708.04 for local food banks with 65 Cadets, midshipmen, and active duty personnel participating. We then had a 9/11 PT Challenge honoring those we lost, with 72 participants for this event. Lastly, we had a Veteran's Day PT challenge with 38 participants, and Army ROTC towered the leaderboard of scores overall, overall males, and overall females.

CORNELL ROTC BRIGADE VETERANS DAY PT CHALLENGE



CORNELL ROTC UNIT PARTICIPATION

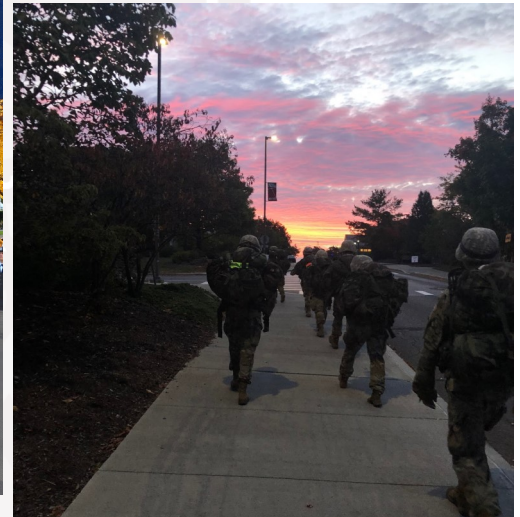
UNIT	PARTICIPANTS	% OF UNIT
CORNELL AROTC	28	29.79%
CORNELL NROTC	8	17.78%
CORNELL AFROTC	2	4.76%

CORNELL ROTC BRIGADE VETERANS DAY PT CHALLENGE



OVERALL

	NAME	ORG.	SCORE
1ST	Reese Kemen	AROTC	12.64
2ND	Collin Melly	AROTC	12.52
3RD	Brian Lossing	AROTC	12.5
4TH	Emily Segal	AROTC	12.3
5TH	Leslie zhang	AROTC	12



PT Pods



Fall 2020 Photo Book



Army 10 Miler



Change of Command + Contracting



Halloween PT



← Winning Costume—TMNT
CDTs Unrath, McNamara, Yeh, and Hoskins



Class of 2021 Assignments

Active Duty:

Jeremy Boka - Infantry
Tobias dePeyster - Infantry
Fallon Huck - Nurse Corps
Christopher Koch* - Infantry
Brian Lossing - Military Intelligence Branch Detail Field Artillery
Samuel Margolis - Air Defense Artillery
Isaac McCurdy* - Military Intelligence Branch Detail Infantry
Gerald O'Connor - Military Police
Claire Ramirez** - Medical Service Corps
Tyler Seccafico - Engineers
Megan Unrath* - Medical Corps

National Guard:

Giselle Aragon
Jake Bella - Aviation
Patrick Campbell - Engineers
Rachel Cary* - Medical Corps
Noah Harrelson
Brenon Weed

Reserve Army:

Amber Baez - Adjutant General
Leslie Zhang - Adjutant General



** denotes top 10% of graduating Cadets in the nation

* denotes Distinguished Military Graduate (top 20% of Cadets)

Supporting Our Program

Please remember the Excelsior Battalion as the Cornell Giving Day approaches! Keep an eye out on social media for updates with when and how to donate.

The Excelsior Battalion wishes everyone a wonderful holiday season. Stay safe and healthy!



Social Media

Facebook: Cornell Army ROTC

Instagram: @armyrotccornell

**S5 Public Affairs Officer: Amber Baez
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**S5 Events: Megan Unrath
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S5 Recruiting: Noah Harrelson (nmh65@cornell.edu)

