



**The alarm rings at 0600, which means it's time to start another day as a knob. Sweep detail begins, so I need to get a move on. As knobs, we are in charge of keeping the barracks clean and emptying the trash. After a while, this becomes routine and something that can be accomplished in a short time. I head back up to my room to get ready for morning formation.**

Before every meal, there is an accountability formation on the red and white quadrangle inside the barracks. My shoes and my brass need to be shined because I will be inspected. The horn sounds five minutes before 0700, giving us the signal to head downstairs. Several upperclassmen approach and examine every inch of my uniform. My appearance seems to be great, but there are many times I have forgotten to do something. The barracks erupts with yelling before a formation and is quite a spectacle. As my squad sergeant appears, he drops us to the pushup position, known to us as front leaning rest. After we pump out 20 pushups, another horn sounds and we form up in our respective areas on the quad. Reveille is played, and we march to mess.

Eating is one of the most difficult adjustments to make as a knob. Proper etiquette is strictly enforced, and big mistakes earn corrective punishments. I have to sit up straight on the front three inches of my chair and ensure that the upperclassmen are properly served. When the meal is over, I quickly get back to the barracks for another sweep detail. Time is always something I feel that I never have enough of. Class begins at 0800, so I need to clean my room for MRI (morning room inspection), grab my books and head out. Even while going to class, knobs have to maintain a strict military bearing.

"Knob, halt," a senior interrupts me on the way to class. "What's for lunch?"

Upperclassmen around campus constantly ask what the menu is for the day, and this is something that every knob is required to know.

"Sir, chicken sandwiches, chips and dip, sir!" I respond and carry on.

The purpose of coming to The Citadel is to get an education, and I always put my studies before anything else. In the academic buildings, the fourth-class system ends temporarily. Academics are taken seriously by everyone, and the buildings provide a comfortable environment to learn. They even provide a break from life as a knob.

Preparing for lunch involves the same routine as breakfast with inspection and formation. Again, I need to hustle to class after lunch. The period between afternoon classes and dinner provides a little time to study, PT (physical training) or just to relax a little bit. From after dinner until taps at 2300, I study and work on academic projects. I take this time very seriously, and I usually leave the barracks and study in an academic building to have a quieter environment.

Another aspect of life aside from the mental is the physical. PT is conducted at least twice a week and can be a struggle for someone unprepared. I thought that I was in good enough shape to do well, but the exercise still pushed me beyond my limits. After an entire week of class, inspections, drill, shining, PT and studying, we have a retreat parade to officially begin the weekend. The free



time we have on the weekends, known as general leave, is one of my favorite times, and it gives everyone a chance to catch up on sleep and to prepare for another week.

Life as a fourth-class cadet can be frustrating, but the system is designed to be a challenge. In the end, I find it to be totally worth the sacrifice. Never would I expect to excel in academics the way I have done here and also improve my physical bearing.

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