



**J**unior year is a defining time. The years previous to being an upperclassman are distinguished by receiving orders and carefully taking everything in. As a knob, you learn to operate by simply doing, not thinking. Stopping to think takes time, and life becomes easier when you learn to follow orders. Cadets are taught that leaders cannot lead until they learn how to follow. Sophomore year is also about following, but the veil of being a knob is lifted, and you can see the system for its advantages and its flaws. Learning from others' mistakes sets the tone for becoming a leader. The first two years are key to defining a cadet's role as he or she moves onto junior year and takes on leadership positions.

I've heard that junior year is the most difficult. As I near the end of it, I certainly hope this is true. Returning to Law Barracks after the summer, I was ambitious and hopeful about taking my position as a first sergeant. I knew that there were some areas that needed to be changed within the company, such as overall appearance and accountability, but I was not prepared for the challenge of leading my own classmates. The hardest thing was learning to make corrections when I knew something was wrong. As the year moved on, however, I slowly began to understand the requirements of the position.

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Simply put, I am like a hall monitor, the person the cadets hide from. When they see me coming, they know they have done something wrong. My job is to uphold the standards. The position is not always fun, but I have grown personally and learned more about myself through the experience. I would live the year again if necessary, to learn what I know now.

My day begins early in the morning when I hear the soft swish of brooms in the galleries as the knobs perform their daily sweep detail. I lie there enjoying the moment and wait for my selected knob to wrestle with the door handle no one seems to know how to work and hear my trash can being whisked away to the dumpster, then returned seconds later. Eventually, the alarm clock goes off, telling me that yet another day has begun, and it is time to rise and shine—my shoes and brass, that is—and then take my post on the quad.

I smile, remembering how far I've come, as I watch the sergeants inspecting their knobs or dropping them for pushups, and then I find my corner of the quad when the horn calls everyone to their respective places. The knobs sound off and make a dull roar as they walk briskly to their places behind their sergeants before reveille. The lunch routine is much the same, only the knobs are guaranteed to be dropped for pushups, which means dirty hands and a mild workout before eating.

Night life in the barracks is where being a cadet becomes unique. I live with roughly 420 guys in third battalion, and we are all forced to experience our cadet careers without air conditioning. We spend the night on campus at least five days a week, and most of the time life becomes too hectic to escape on the weekends, so we just stay here. Part of my job as first sergeant is to ensure a quiet academic environment, and I have had to train myself to jump at the slightest disturbance in the barracks. The most challenging moments are when the World Series ends or the latest reality show concludes, and everyone pours out of the seniors' rooms to yell either contempt or excitement for the result. That is when the hall

monitor must come to the rescue of those diligently studying and remind people to quietly return to their rooms. It is not a job I particularly enjoy, but it is my duty, and I comply. At last the day ends with taps reminding everyone that yet another day as a cadet is over, and we are all one step closer to leaving the gates forever.

No one can possibly know what life as a cadet is like until the barracks life is experienced. Movies or novels may try to portray our unique lifestyle, but people on the outside will never know until they experience it for themselves why we feel passionately about The Citadel. Being a cadet is more than wearing a uniform and marching in parade. Being a cadet means the daily lifestyle and unique opportunity to live, work, sleep and experience The Citadel. When the iron gates are locked, the quad lights are shut off and peace resides over the campus, I stand outside my room gazing at the red and white checkers and know sadly that my time here is short. I have come to realize that despite all the difficulties that come with the position, it is an honor and privilege to be a cadet.

