

### Three and a Half Weeks and Nothing To Do...

I got home pretty early in December, so many of my friends weren't home yet. With no pending school assignments, I had nothing to do during the day. So, I decided to return to the Office of Ohio State Senator Eric Kearney; I was an intern there for three years during high school. So, I went back and got right back into the swing of things.



*Senator Eric Kearney*

The first day I was back, the Electoral College was voting for the President. I had the chance to attend the ceremony—I saw the actual votes being cast for the President!



It was great to be back working in to the office for the few days I was able to go in.

## Serving Food: It Must be the Holiday Season!

Every year when I go home, I get the chance to serve a holiday dinner to the homeless and unemployed individuals living in Columbus. I go to St. Paul AME church, which is downtown, and participate in their "Miracle on Long Street" I got involved there because my friend from middle school goes to church there. One year he invited my dad and me to participate, and both of us have gone back every year since then! This year my friend was still at school when I went to serve, but his mom was there. It was great to see her! I always enjoy spending an evening with my dad handing out drinks.



But that night was just the beginning of a food and serving-filled weekend. The next day was my mom's annual Christmas open house...where all she serves is Christmas cookies and holiday drinks! She bakes hundreds of cookies and then invites everyone she knows to come and eat them. I invite my friends, too (I've even brought this tradition to the Academy).



## **Back in the Uniform**

There were two opportunities for me to put the uniform back on while I was at home. The first occasion was the alumni day at my high school. I returned there in uniform to talk about the Coast Guard Academy and post-high school life. I had a chance to see many of my friends—both graduates and some students who are still in high school.

The second opportunity was the next day. I went down to Cincinnati, Ohio with Nick (another 3/c at the CG Academy) where we attended an All-Academy Ball. It was the first time either of us had attended one, so it was pretty exciting for us. We met up with several other cadets from the Coast Guard Academy. We may have been small in number, but we certainly stood out as the best cadets and midshipmen there.



It was an enjoyable evening, and I can't wait to go back next year!

## Doing What I Love

I love hanging out with my friends. I enjoy talking with them and catching up. It's fun to exchange stories about our adventures. Some of our experiences have been very different—polar opposites, in fact—but some are pretty similar. Whether it's grabbing a bite to eat (for example, with Patrice) or going out for the evening, I always look forward to seeing my friends.



*Lunch with Patrice at Chipotle (We don't have one of these in New London!)*

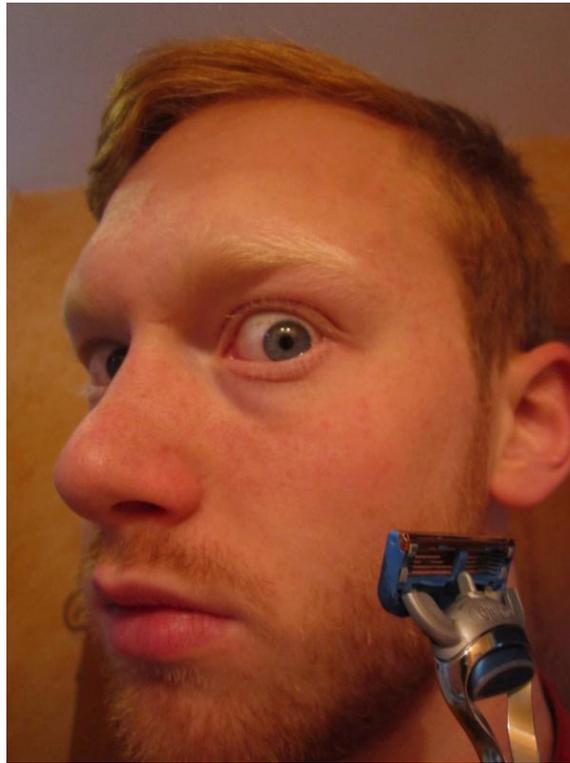


*Snowball fight on New Year's Eve. You're never too old to play in the snow!*

One popular place to go during the holidays is the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. They put up millions of holiday lights, called the Wildlights—all over the zoo. There is a light show around the central lake and some of the animals that can tolerate the cold weather are out to see.



Another thing I really love about being home for leave is that fact that I don't have to shave! Every time I go home I grow out a full face of hair. I used to have a beard and mustache in high school, and I miss having it. It saddens me every morning at the Academy when I shave (because I have to shave every morning to stay in regulations). Here's a picture from before I had to shave to get back in uniform.



## Fitting Right Back In

Whenever I return from the Academy, I have no trouble at all getting back into the swing of things at home. This year I had the opportunity to play in the Christmas Eve services orchestra at my church (there wasn't an ensemble last Christmas, which was pretty disappointing). It was great to have an opportunity at home to play the trumpet! I enjoy music and hope to continue with it in some shape or form at the Academy.

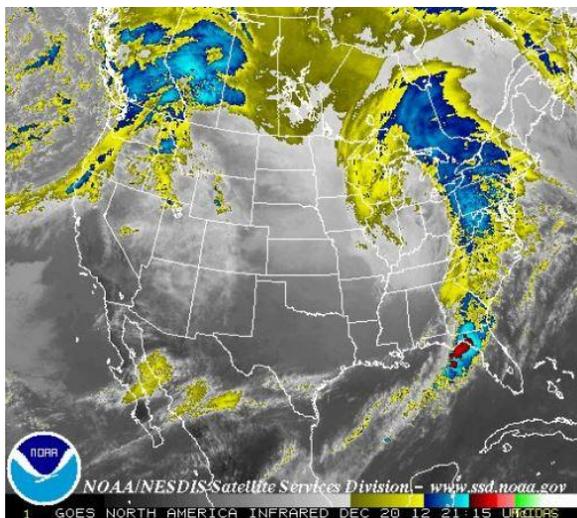


## Don't Forget What You Learned in School!

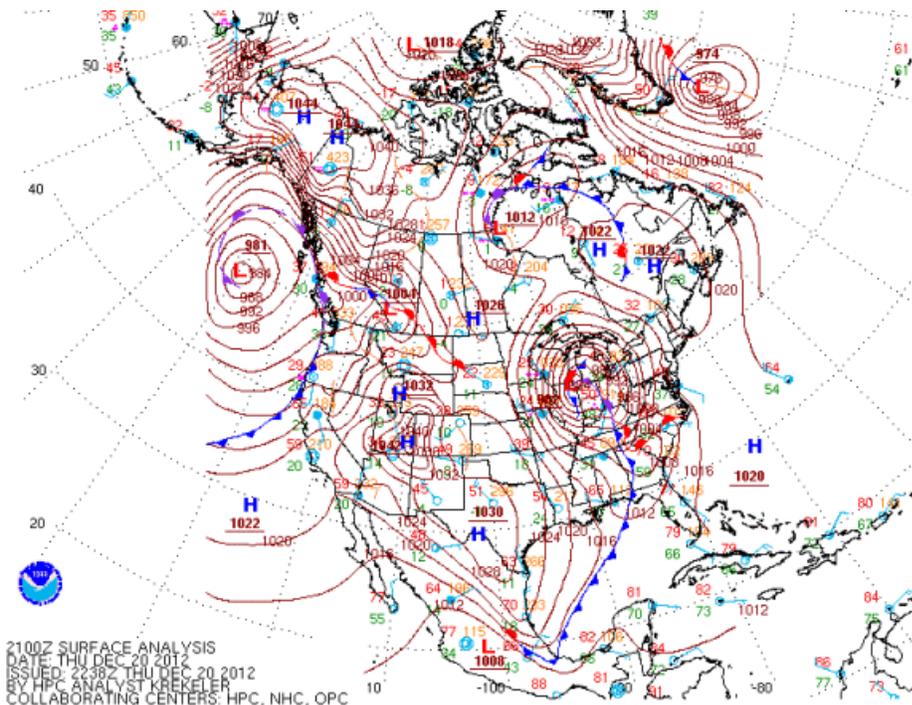
While I was home, we got a lot of snow! Having just completed a meteorology class, I was pretty excited by the winter weather. Normally I wouldn't be because it makes running outside difficult, but while it was "storming," I was pretty excited. Here's a fun story that helps me to appreciate all that I learned this semester in meteorology (Thank you, LT T. and LT F!).

I was in my room, and my grandmother was watching television in the living room (same floor). I heard the meteorologist say, "This winter storm is hitting 16 states." I thought to myself, "Oh, mid-latitude cyclone, advanced occlusion."

So, I went online to check the weather maps to confirm my "hypothesis." This first picture, from NOAA, the characteristic comma-shape of a "mid-lat-cyc," as I affectionately call these large storm systems.



Next, I found on the NOAA website a surface map of the pressure systems over the continental U.S. It's difficult to see, but the purple to the left of the red L "hovering" near the Great Lakes is the advanced occluded front.



We may not have had the end of the world (Dec. 21), but we had some pretty nasty storms. I'll take that. Pretty cool stuff!