

**What's It Like**

# LOCAL RECRUITS DEAL WITH THE RIGORS OF BOOT CAMP

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PARRIS ISLAND, S.C. — Few people come to boot camp for the food.

Sean Davis is one of them.

He's here at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot on Parris Island in the hopes of becoming a cook.

"It's a slow job market," the 21-year-old West Millbury resident said.

After he graduates in May following the 12 weeks of intense training that all recruits must endure, he expects to specialize in food service preparation.

Mr. Davis was one of numerous recruits from northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan to call this island home temporarily. Though, this is not to say it's like home at all — unless you're used to 10-mile hikes, swimming with your clothes and boots on, drill instructors getting in your face, and crawling around in sand pits.

It can push some recruits to the breaking point.

"It's been rough, sir, but this recruit gets through it," said Daniel Restivo, 20, of Wauseon. (Recruits all speak like this — in the third person — to emphasize that they are part of a team, not an individual.)

The worst part for him could be the sand fleas, nasty little buggers that bite and seem to be everywhere on the island. No time to worry about them, though, or much else.

"No fun and leisure in boot camp, sir," he said, looking through his thick, standard-issue, plastic-frame eyeglasses. Some Marines jokingly call them BCGs (Birth Control Glasses).

The daily routines have sometimes proven more challenging than the physical training, Mr. Restivo said.

"Training is fun, sir, but waking up in the morning is tough for this recruit, sir."

Sometimes wake-up time is 5 a.m. Sometimes 4:30 a.m.

Time itself is fluid here. Just ask Jeffrey Myers, 19, of Bellevue. "I'm not sure what day it is," he said.

He joined the Marines with his girlfriend, influenced in large part by the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Even having someone he loves so near at hand, it hasn't been easy.

"I see her in church, but I can't talk to her," he said. "It's pretty tough."

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James Waddington 17, of West Toledo, said he's not too worried about the possibility of serving abroad in the war against terror after he leaves boot camp.

"It doesn't bother me," he said. "It's what I get trained to do."

Of more immediate concern to him was the Crucible, a gut-wrenching 54-hour test of mental and physical obstacles that recruits must complete before they can be called Marines.

Mr. Waddington was about 10 hours into the exercise, his face smudged with face paint or dirt or maybe both.

"My legs are tired," he said before moving on to the next obstacle, a huge tower he had to scale called the

Stairway to Heaven. “I feel pretty confident.”

Once finished with the Crucible, recruits can look forward to graduation, which Brian Vella, 19, of Dundee, experienced April 7 with 506 other new Marines.

As his platoon’s honor graduate, he jumped to the rank of lance corporal and had a special role carrying the group’s guidon, a small flag, during the ceremony. When it was all over, he said it was a dream come true enjoyed in front of his supportive, patriotic family.

“Great day, sir.”

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