



SAME/USAF A Engineering & Construction Camp Colorado Springs, Colorado - 5-11 July, 2007



Camp Summary

The Society of American Military Engineers camp in Colorado was an experience of a lifetime. I went uncertain of what I would find and left with a new outlook on my future and with skills to help me succeed in whichever path I choose. From the first day of teambuilding activities to the final concrete beam destruction event, I was involved in numerable activities that were both enjoyable and instructive. Walking across the stage when I graduated I realized how much I had learned and what I was capable of doing in my future.

I remember when I first arrived; walking out of the terminal I looked around for the SAME greeter and hesitantly walked towards a crowd of young adults huddled together. As I came closer I noticed the camp sign then looked around and realized I was the only female! I stood there awkwardly for a moment before timidly asking if there were going to be any other girls. They all laughed and assured me there were several others coming later!

Each day was something new and brought with it excitement. The very first thing we did upon arriving was to organize into our flights and have a team building competition. For this we were equipped with a GPS tracker and the outdoors. There was a 1.5 mile course we had to run around trying to locate several items positioned with the GPS. In the days that followed our teams also competed in several other events. We had a water purifying system constructed with only a water cooler, clothing, tape, rocks, and a few other minute items that were able to clean extremely unsanitary water to an almost consumable consistency. Along with learning how to set up a functional sprinkler system, I learned how to put up a military temper tent, construct balsawood beams, bridges, and even make a catapult! One of the more extensive activities was the construction of an 8x8x8 foot shed over a period of two days. This involved planning out a design and coordinating with our sister team who built the roof. Everything we did involved planning and in depth critical thinking.

I especially enjoyed the NORAD tour at Cheyenne Mountain. That impressed all of us and showed me how engineering can be used to accomplish even the most challenging feats. Another one of what I believed to be the more influential activities was the USAFA Laboratory tours. This took us right into the Academy classrooms and labs to show us "what really happens out there". We were able to explore several fields within the broad generality of engineering such as mechanical, electrical, environmental, and civil. This really helped me to see what I was interested in the most. Along with everything we did, I was genuinely intrigued and satisfied.

Life at the campsite itself was incredible. The setting was beautiful and it was a privilege to stay on the Academy grounds. However, it was shocking to be in such cold weather. At night I ended up sleeping with two seeping bags, three pairs of pants, four shirts, and three pairs of socks! Even during the day it remained cool and I wore jeans and a jacket almost the whole time. Despite the chill, it was refreshing to be in such a different climate.

Our daily schedule was always well planned out. We awoke at about 6:30am and from then on the rest of the day was packed with activities and events for us to attend. I was very happy with the balance of time. And of course the food was great, too! We always had a bit of extra time to recoup and get to know our fellow teammates and campers which made the experience much more enjoyable. However, there was never too much excess time that we would get bored or not know what to do. Overall the schedule was perfectly balanced.

Had it not been for the incredible mentors and instructors I believe my experience would have been half that of what it was. Each flight of students had a leader who was a class of 2008 USAFA cadet. They were our main influence throughout the camp and provided us with insight to the Academy and military world. My flight leader, Ben Wong led us on tours of the campus and guided us throughout our time spent there. We were able to connect with them on a personal level and all became great friends because they were very friendly and good leaders. Each flight was also lead by two mentors who were either aspiring engineers or currently in that career field. I was lucky enough to have Capt. Timothy Barnard and intern Whitney Curry to be assigned to my flight. They provided us with guidance and leadership every step of the way. If there was ever any question or concern none of us had any hesitation to go to them any time. Even the Cadre were all personable and available for any help we needed or question we had.

SAME camp was an amazing and insightful experience that helped me to see what the field of engineering holds in a real world perspective. The best part was being able to do hands on activities that were all tied in to leadership, teambuilding, basic concepts, construction, physics, and engineering that challenged our minds. It was a privilege to be selected to go and is an experience I will undoubtedly never forget.