



Former UVAC Swim Team member in the news

West Point's Teresa Groton Pinned as Honor Graduate of Air Assault School

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Courtesy of Army West Point Athletics

Upon their nineteenth birthdays, most young adults are worried about how they will celebrate and what friends will be in attendance. But for Teresa Groton of the Army West Point women's swim and dive team, her 19th birthday meant learning about helicopters and sling load procedures, all while preparing for a 60-foot rappel out of a hovering UH-60 Blackhawk.

For 11 days, Groton completely engrossed herself into Air Assault School, and by the end she earned her wings and was pinned the Distinguished Honor Graduate of the Sabalauski Air Assault School Class 701-15.

"The school is designed to qualify soldiers for air assault missions," explained Groton. "That means missions where helicopters and ground troops are combined to create an effective and highly mobile fighting force."

Air Assault School is not for the faint of heart, or for those afraid of heights. However, Groton was able to conquer her fears, first at 40-feet from the ground.

"I did well mostly because I just thought the whole concept was so cool," she said. "I love helicopters and I got to do nothing but learn about and work with helicopters for eleven days, concluding with a 60-foot rappel out of one. If that doesn't make you feel awesome I don't know what would. The weird thing is that I'm actually terrified of heights, you can ask Coach Wender about my attempts to jump off the 6m at Crandall Pool."

"I know Teresa struggled with a fear of heights early in

the year," said head coach Mickey Wender. "Her ability to perform so well at Air Assault School is a testament to her character."

After overcoming her fears the first day, Groton excelled through to the top of the class.

"Air Assault gave me a great opportunity to work through that fear," revealed Groton. "I was visibly shaking the first time I had to rappel off the open side of a 40 ft tower, but through Air Assault school I was able to work up to hanging off the side of a flying helicopter 60 feet in the air."

As the head men's and women's swimming and diving coach, Wender has seen the growth of a multitude of cadet-athletes throughout his tenure.

"Teresa is a very hard-working and conscientious athlete," he said. "She loves a good challenge and thrives in a competitive environment. I'm not at all surprised by her accomplishments in training this summer. She brings the same level of consistency and intensity to everything she does."

Groton was not just the Honor Graduate, but was pinned by General Voleski, the division commander of the 101st Division, the only Air Assault division in the world. Also in attendance was her father, Lt. Colonel Groton. He was able to proudly watch his 19 year old daughter complete her final rappel out of the helicopter, which is the same age he was when he earned his Air Assault wings.

"Overall, it was an incredible experience, and I'm very grateful to have gotten the opportunity to get my Air Assault wings, which I wear proudly every day," Groton said.