

7-31-2019

Dear Mr. Scott Pierce:

Enclosed is the two essay winners. We couldn't decide which one was best so we decided to give two scholarships this year.

The young men that won was Hunter Harris and Preston Scott, two well deserved young men.

Thank you for all your donations to the SSG Brian Freeman Memorial Scholarship.

Sincerely,

Patricia Freeman

What it means to serve and why I plan to commission in the Air Force

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Elmer Davis, the Director of the U.S. Office of War Information during WWII, once said

“This nation will remain the land of the free only so long as it is the home of the brave”. Our country was built upon escaping religious persecution, seeking opportunity, and gaining personal freedoms. The values established by our founding fathers in 1776 have remained in place 241 years by those who have fought and lost their lives to protect these beliefs. We remember these contributors to our great nation every year; however, patriotism is not roused out of someone through tragedy, by rally, or simply on a holiday. It is the personal connection that one has with their country and the representation of unconditional pride and support in the way that nation functions.

The Bible says that “There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. (John 15:13)”. But what does that mean to me? It means that there is no greater sacrifice than giving one's life for their country. A belief in the people, a belief in the nation, and a belief in something far greater than one's own personal agenda. Because of this idea, I plan to commission in the United States Air Force through the ROTC program at Mississippi State University.

The military is built upon core values. Values that form foundational principles that guide how an individual will conduct themselves. I believe these values stem from the Oath that everyone takes upon entering service and the beliefs our founding fathers built this country upon. The Air Force Core Values are Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do. I believe in the Air Force Core Values and what they represent. They set the framework for building a successful life both personally and professionally.

First, I feel that the Integrity First core value means doing what is right even when no one is looking. Everyone should strive for integrity as defines who a person is and what sets them apart from others. It means they are trustworthy and reliable. I will continually strive to do what is right and always make my integrity a priority because putting integrity first means to have honor. Second, Service Before Self means professional goals take precedence before personal goals. It is a sacrifice. A sacrifice to trust those appointed to leadership roles and to have faith in them. I believe this core value requires a person to have discipline and serve honorably. This core value ties into having courage. Lastly, pursuing excellence means to strive for the best version of ourselves in all aspects of life. Without challenges within in one's life, it is impossible to develop as an individual. The pursuit of excellence results in an open mind that never stops learning.

After 18 years in Caledonia, I feel that with my upbringing, my personal views, goals, and aspirations have prepared me for what is yet to come. I have just as much to give the military and the world as it has already given me. Ultimately, I can only hope to have the honor, the courage, and the bravery of those like SSG Freeman; that made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure all of us are afforded the opportunities to live in this great nation. It is my privilege to even be considered for this scholarship. Winston Churchill once said, "We sleep safely at night because rough men stand ready to visit violence on those who would harm us."

True American Freedom

America, home of the free, but is that freedom **really** free? My feelings regarding that topic is emphatically NO! American soldiers have fought for American freedoms, as well for freedoms of other countries that are facing oppression for centuries. Since the American Revolution, hundreds of thousands of American soldiers have died in combat or training; the ultimate price for freedom.

The American soldier, a true patriot, one that puts love of country before love of self. A soldier is selfless, making all the sacrifices voluntarily to fight for and defend at all costs our country. A soldier, regardless of race, gender, rank, or branch of service is dedicated to protect and defend. Spouses and children of our soldiers bear a heavy load as well. At any time, the normal day to day life could be changed. A sudden deployment, whether to be overseas fighting for freedoms, or on our own soil to help in times of natural disaster, these things affect every aspect of the household. These families are also selfless in my opinion, knowing that in some instances, their soldier may not return home for long periods of time, or even at all. Lives changed instantly and forever, for our freedoms.

For these people, the thousands and thousands that so bravely serve, and their families, and for those that have already paid the ultimate price for our freedoms, I am grateful. Grateful because with out them, our country may not have the freedoms of today. Our freedoms of religion, speech, honestly, just living our every day lives, these freedoms are taken for granted every day. I too have been guilty of just getting up and doing whatever it is I need to do, not thinking of what really has shaped our country to allow me to live the way I do.

I come from a family that has served, my dad, both of my great grandfathers as well. My

father served in the ARMY, not during a conflict, but did serve as a unit for peace keeping overseas. He is now in law enforcement, again, one that serves and protects. I am very proud to see his efforts and sacrifices made to keep my family and the community safe.

I cannot express enough how proud I am to come from a community like Caledonia, one that is family focused, very military friendly, and still displays our flag proudly!! Friday night football games---flag flown, pray offered and National Anthem not forgotten. No knees for Caledonia. To live and be able to freely go to school, work a job, attend any church (without oppression), voice an opinion, cast a vote...all these things make me proud to live in this country and this community. A country where freedom has definitely NOT been free, but is fought for and defend every day.

My most sincere gratitude to your family for offering this opportunity to the community and for your sacrifices and your son's ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms.

Word Count 510