

Lessons in the 954

Joining the TX-954 AFJROTC outfit of Wharton High School was the best decision I have made toward refining my citizenship from personal duty to personal pride. With a long background in Boy Scouts of America, I knew from an early age what good citizenship should consist of, what it means to help my community and nation, and also the necessity of appreciating and respecting our banner as well as those who have and are currently defending it. Consequently, in an effort to continue living these principles, I joined JROTC where I learned not only how to serve my country and how these traditions came to be, but also have a better respect for our banner and a desire to pass the traditions on to our fellow citizens.

Learning how to fold and respect the flag of the United States and those who have fought for it is one of the most important lessons I have learned because both are the heart and soul of our country. We could not have won the American Revolution without our banner to rally under to stand as one, nor would the Union have formed without those soldiers: mere men who had the determination as well as the pride in their ideals to stand together against the most powerful military in the world to not only come out alive but as the victor. Learning the history of the United States has refined my outlook on my country as well as why I should respect veterans and our flag. Throughout my climb up our JROTC totem pole, I was driven to learn about the best possible way to show that respect. This knowledge comes from my Instructors and our books as I learn etiquette such as folding the banner, proper display and care of it, and how it came to be the "Stars and Stripes" we see today. Even more importantly than just understanding our customs, I learned in my long term of JROTC how to teach my

fellow citizens and younger cadets about these customs and how to demonstrate the respect and traditions themselves. Now in my future I plan to take this wealth of knowledge of our country and I will be able to teach it to my future co-workers, fellow college students, and friends alike. No better feeling exists than not only doing good deeds for Lady Liberty, but educating more minds to join me so we can do greater things to support the general welfare of our communities, states, and our country.

If I had not had my years in our unit, I believe I may have been a satisfactory citizen, but with JROTC I know I will now be able to look at my friends, family, co-workers, bosses and other acquaintances and say "This is our country; this is our home. Without it we would not have the blessings of inalienable rights. Without us contributing to the union, America cannot keep these blessings secure". Even though these people may tell me that their little sacrifice and volunteering could not possibly make a big difference for the American effort, from my experience with JROTC, I will be able to tell them that making a difference does not happen by themselves. The "United" States should tell them it takes united Americans to make a difference. Not only will we get more service done, but the community will be united as Americans, and as one joins the tide, the nation would only tsunami to follow. "Ask not what your country can do for you" (JFK, 1961), we will ask "what is the nation not capable of doing united as one". The answer will be simply nothing.

JROTC is the best experience of my life; I have had some of the most fun times, met the best of friends, seen the most extraordinary things, and heard the best stories. However, one thing that I will remember the most is how I learned how to take good care of my country, the United States of America.

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