

As I recall, the morning was monotonously average; the day was September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Eight years of existence had not prepared me for my bubble of security to be so brutally broken. Meandering down the stairs, I was met with the incredulous shouts of my father as reporters on the TV conveyed their stories in dismay. At the time, I didn't understand the true impact of what was happening. But, I did not need familiarity of monuments or knowledge of cities to feel my dad's anger. Shocked by my dad's anger, I had just been introduced to the real world. Generations are not branded by tragedies; they are defined by the people who emerge from the smoke with renewed resolve. On that day I recognized that the nation would need leaders; leaders forged with the values of honor, courage, and commitment. There are few places where one can be imbued with such core principles. One such place is the United States Naval Academy. Standing motionless waiting for others solves nothing, and complacency kills. The time is now for me to make my country proud: to become a Midshipman!

Complacency breeds failure. I knew from a young age that I did not want to stand still; I wanted to be someone. Taking the conventional path to college and sleeping until noon or partying through the night will not make America proud of me. I know that the Naval Academy life leaves no room for being stagnant: "[...] the physical demands will be nothing you've ever seen. If you're not in your dorm then you're running everywhere you go. From physical conditioning to class and then run right back for more physical conditioning" (Dickerson Interview). Uniforms are mandatory wear around the clock and learning does not even stop for running your umpteenth mile (Moriarty Online). And there definitely won't be time for partying because not only are T.V. and music prohibited for freshmen, but lights-out is at 10pm and you must be dressed and ready to move out by 7am the next day (Dickerson Interview). This is to prepare you for life in the military where being an officer means being on-call night and day

(“Military Chaplain” Occupational Guidance). With the continuous level of activity, both physical and academic, I can be molded into the more driven and skillful person that is needed to become an integral part of the next generation of leaders in our great nation.

Learning facts is but a mere instrument for the many other vital things learned at the U.S. Naval Academy. One such thing is the central lesson of brotherhood. Your new life in the Navy begins with the extremely arduous “Plebe Summer” where boys fight and bond tightly together to become hardened men. Then, all the students are organized into six companies in each of six battalions in each of two regiments in the one brigade of “Midshipmen” (Dickerson Interview). At the Academy I can learn the tough lessons in loyalty and leadership. These essential things are learned hands-on by being given the responsibility of guiding hundreds of lower-classmen and leading them to fulfilling the mission at Annapolis:

“To develop midshipmen morally, mentally and physically and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor and loyalty in order to provide graduates who are dedicated to a career of naval service and have potential for future development in mind and character to assume the highest responsibilities of command, citizenship and government.” (Moriarty Online)

According to the U.S.N.A. website, before getting the chance to lead as an upperclassman however, your brotherhood with your fellow future-leaders must be confirmed. At the end of your freshman year an important monument on the campus is greased with lubricant and your unit is given just one goal: get a Midshipman’s hat to the top. The Plebes have no devices, no aids. All they have is their love and unity for their brothers next to them in order to reach the pinnacle. The Herculean task consists of hours of supporting your classmates on your shoulders as you slowly reach the top. This ceremony symbolizes the end of the freshmen year, but it truly

shows the commitment and vital life lessons of loyalty and self-sacrifice that are instilled within each student. And that is after only one of four long, hard, and meaningful years. Being blessed with the opportunity to be a part of something that powerful, would be humbling.

Once again, I mustn't be slow to action. The amazing opportunities at the United States Naval Academy aren't easy to acquire. The hard work can't wait for just before high school graduation. Chris Dickerson, the U.S.N.A. "squid" that I interviewed, scored a thirty-five out of thirty-six on the ACT and was in the top 3% of his high school graduating class. He definitely confirmed my suspicions that taking as many challenging courses in high school and staying involved in extra-curricular activities will be a must if I want to be admitted into the very exclusive Academy. The United States Naval Academy website also added that leading a life of service and putting the needs of others before your own is just as important as physical aptitude and academic prowess (Moriarty Online). Such an institution based on these lofty goals and expectations can help me continue to strive to be my very best.

Keeping up the pace and accomplishing those things and many more as a Midshipman will give me a very strong outlook for the future. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, job opportunities for servicemen, after completing compulsory duty, are very high. As well, after twenty years of service, pension is available (Bureau of Labor Statistics Online). Furthermore, graduate universities, like Georgetown for Chris Dickerson, will be impressed with your great achievements and your demonstrated commitment to the highest standards of quality. Plus, if graduate schools are impressed, then you will easily stand out to prospective employers (Bureau of Labor Statistics Online).

"Not because they are easy, but because they are hard." This quote from John F. Kennedy exemplifies my burning desire to attend the United States Naval Academy and attain all that it

stands for. I may have been standing immobile, shocked into a dazed silence, with the rest of our beleaguered nation on that infamous September 11<sup>th</sup> so many years ago; but now is the time for my character to show its true colors. To do anything it takes to provide a better service to others. Now is the time to make a difference in my life and in our nation. Now is the time for me to attend the United States Naval Academy.