

During the years I was in the National Guard, I was in the 1-117th Artillery Battalion in the Alabama National Guard, and when I graduated with my associate from the Military Junior College I was attending, I moved to the 2-142nd Infantry Battalion in the Texas National Guard, while I finished my bachelor's degree.

What inspired you to join the armed forces?

There were numerous things that inspired me to join the military. As a kid, I was always fascinated by the military and Soldiering, and always imagined myself as a general or a field marshal, standing upon the deck of a tank charging in. A rather unrealistic notion now, but it was fun to imagine as a kid. Later in life, when I was 16, the Twin Towers fell, and that set the stage for me to begin to find a way to get into the military. I then went through a phase in Military School where I was taken aside and told that I should consider a different career path, that this would likely not work for me, which hardened my resolve to get in (I'll elaborate on that in one of the later questions). Now, my interests have somewhat shifted from when I was younger. As I prepare to become a Company Commander in the Army, the driving, primary imperative that fills my mind is "protect the innocent", and should the day come that I'm called to the front, I know I can have a direct hand fulfilling that obligation as a Company Commander.

What did you do before you volunteered?

I graduated from High School.

What was the most important experience you had in the military?

There is somewhat of a story to this, which I mentioned in an earlier question, though I'd change the "most important" to "most meaningful". Before I joined the military, I was morbidly obese. I weighed 330 pounds, and not an ounce of it was muscle. I was a very sedentary child, who'd never play any sport while growing up, particularly since I engaged in some of the more cerebral of hobbies growing up. During my time in military school, I had one NCO, a Master Sergeant, whom was particularly hard on me in my attempts to get into the Army. In physical training I would receive the constant berating comments such as "why do you think you'll ever get in", or "do you really think I'll let your fat ass in to pollute my previous Army". On one certain occasion, he pulled me aside, and with all earnestness he could must expressed to me that based on my physical condition, I should consider a different path in life, and to try and save some money (referring to the tuition fees). I was undeterred by this, however, in fact, his comments only served to harden my resolve. Three years later (I did have to do an extra year at the Military Junior College, as I did not quite meet the height and weight requirements to continue by the end of my first year), when I received my Commission as a Second Lieutenant, that same E-8 approached me, shook my hand, rendered my second salute, and told me "you did what I did not believe possible, and you've earned everything you've gotten, Sir."

How did your service in the military affect your life today?

Profoundly, I suppose? I'm not sure quite how to answer this question, as the Army still largely IS my life currently.

What kind of advice would you give to someone looking to volunteer today?

For those seeking to enter service now, there are a few things I'd recommend. First, and most important of all, learn determination. To show determination in your efforts, in the face of adversity, to last through all the mind games that are played at the beginning of your service, will garner a great deal of respect, and with that respect, you will build relationships that will follow you through your career, and even lifetime. Secondly, build relationships with anyone you can, particularly those who are not in your area of specialty, for if you have good relationships with people outside your MOS, you will be far more effective in what you do, since people will be willing to work with you. Lastly, do not let the words or pessimism of others, in or out of the service, determine your actions. Determine what your passion is, pursue it, do not let yourself to ever live to say the day you say 'what if' or 'if only I had...'. Remember that failure is not the end of a journey, but simply a refinement on the road to fulfilling a dream. Some of us will fail many times, Lord knows I have, but failure builds us up if we allow it to. As to the cynicism of others, do not let it detract from your vision, as they will never see beyond a problem, but never develop a solution, and you will distinguish yourself from others if you are the one providing solutions to the problems you encounter rather than being the one who constantly moans about them. Ultimately, the key to success and happiness is this is not through the linear 'you must have these pedigrees to advance' idea, but through the manner you creatively discover the path to fulfill the burning passion that exists at your core.

After filling out this survey, please return it by mailing it to 9 Walker Road, Manchester, MA, 01944. Also, if you would like to, the interview sessions will take place at the American Legion Amaral Bailey Post 113 in Manchester, MA, on March 26th, a Saturday. If you feel comfortable with being interviewed, feel free to show up.

By signing below you agree to have your written information as well as photos and/or tape recordings used and compiled in a book as well as posted online by the Manchester Public Library. Thank you for your participation, and thank you for your selfless service.

Signature: **Jared T. Ray**

Date: **May 4th, 2016**

