

Good morning and Happy Veterans' Day. My name is Cadet 1st Lieutenant Lynae Fisher, most of you know me as Lynae, and I want to thank you all very much for coming today. For the past three years I have been a cross-town cadet through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps program located at SDSU Detachment 780. What this program entails is a trip to Brookings every Thursday morning for class and a return trip in the afternoon for weekly leadership lab. The lab experience is an opportunity to get to know the other cadets as well as participate in fun leadership activities. Many of you may question why I am doing this, and my response to you is also a question, "Why Not?" Why should I not be doing this? I am doing this for you. I'm doing this for your family, your friends, and the children you one day may have. This is also for my family and friends.

Integrity first, Service before self and Excellence in all we do. These are the Air Force core values, and also what I was raised to believe. I grew up in a military family. My great-grandfather served in WW1 and WW2, my grandfathers served in WW2, one in the army, and one in the navy, and my mom served in the Air Force for 33 years, so I have grown-up with first-hand experience in the military, and I know what it means to sacrifice for your country.

So how did I get involved with ROTC? Freshman year we received an email asking if we were interested in a new program that was being started at Augustana. I responded to the email thinking I would just see what the program was all about, and the next thing I knew I was getting off a bus in Alabama at field training. Field training is a requirement for all cadets who wish to become officers after graduation and eligibility begins after sophomore year. It's kind of like basic training and is a month long intensive program that is held for 2 weeks in Alabama and 2 weeks in Mississippi, I lucked out by attending in August. And if you think summer's brutal here.....

The first week of field training was very intense with a high stress level, but we were given the opportunity to attend chapel and they accommodated our religious needs. The first time I went to

chapel I got this..... This is the New Testament and was with me from that moment until today. Even though I wasn't able to read it daily, just knowing that I had it gave me a sense of calm. When times got really bad and it was too much handle and I wanted to quit, I just remembered Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me". This became my mantra!!

At Camp Shelby in Mississippi my bunkmate would read scripture every night. This reminded us that we were not in this alone and we were meant to be there facing the challenges. A true test of my faith came the 2nd to last day of field training. Now you have to understand, at field training we are 100% isolated. No cell phones, no news, nothing. So it was surprising when my Capt. called me into his office and handed me his cell phone saying, "Go call your mom. You have 5 minutes." My parents had planned to come to Alabama for the final parade and review and I thought that I was being told that they couldn't come or their flight was delayed, just something to do with their plans. Before I had left for FT I had told my mom to please not tell me if anything bad happened back home. When I got on the phone with her I knew something was wrong. She told me that my grandpa had passed away a few days before but she knew we would be getting our cell phones back the next day and she didn't want me to find out from anyone else.

As you can imagine, I was distraught and in complete shock. My Grandpa Bill was one of my biggest supporters and was SO excited for me to be doing the ROTC program. He was the one I was most excited to see when I came home, just so I could tell him everything in person. I then knew why I had told my mom not to tell me if anything bad happened. Looking back now, I realize that he had been with me, guiding me through the whole experience. Needless to say, my faith was tested. The next few days were a blur. Between coming home from a very stressful situation, dealing with a funeral and moving back to college within the span of three days, I don't recall many details. However, the one thing that stands out in my mind is what happened at the gravesite. Now, to back up a bit, my grandma

had just passed away 7 months prior from pancreatic cancer and during her 3 week battle dragonflies became a very significant symbol in our family and to this day they remind me of her. While at the gravesite of my Grandpa Bill, after they had folded the flag from his casket and given it to our family, we looked up and were shocked to see that we were surrounded by literally hundreds of dragonflies on that August day. After the ordeal of field training, traveling, and saying goodbye to grandpa, the dragonflies were a message from God giving me peace and calm and a sense that it was going to be ok.

Another passage that helped me through field training was Ephesians 6:12-19. 12 For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this Dark Age. 13 So put on God's armor now! Then when the evil day comes, you will be able to resist the enemy's attacks; and after fighting to the end, you will still hold your ground. 14 So stand ready, with truth as a belt tight around your waist, with righteousness as your breastplate, 15 and as your shoes the readiness to announce the Good News of peace. 16 At all times carry faith as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the Evil One. 17 And accept salvation as a helmet, and the word of God as the sword which the Spirit gives you. 18 Do all this in prayer, asking for God's help. Pray on every occasion, as the Spirit leads. For this reason keep alert and never give up; pray always for all God's people.

This reading reminds me of not only metaphorical armor but also the reality of how we have to protect ourselves and our country. This doesn't always mean engaging in conflict. This can also mean good works, similar to those that ROTC cadets participate in everyday. Military members are not just in place to defend our country and our freedom but to support their neighbors and strangers alike. My mom led her medical squadron on a humanitarian mission to Honduras to provide medical care for local villages and an orphanage where no facilities were available for miles. They also went to Rosebud for a similar medical mission. As we witnessed this summer, our National Guard and military members from

the surrounding states came to the aid of many people who were in danger of losing their homes. The cadets at SDSU begin their community services by participating in many volunteer programs. Some of these are, Vets & Cadets, a program that pairs a cadet with local veterans and the cadet spends time with the veteran and listens to their experiences. Other community service projects that the cadets do are volunteer at the food pantry, meals on wheels, Disabled Veterans of America bingo, and most recently Veteran's Vigil. Veteran's Vigil is where cadets march and protect the monument in Brookings from 11:00 am on Thursday to 11:00 am Friday.

Overall the experience so far has been a great one. After I graduate in May, I will commission and be a 2nd Lt and leave for Space and Missiles training shortly after graduation. I would not change anything that has happened so far. If one thing would be changed, I would not be where I am today. No matter what the future holds for me, I will always live by Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Remember those who have served in order for you to be free. Thank you again for coming and have a great Veteran's Day.