

To America's Drill Sergeants. God Bless and thanks for molding patriots

I was recently blessed with the opportunity to attend a graduation ceremony at Fort Benning. My parents and I were invited to spend our Easter celebration with my brother's family, Sgt. 1st Class William Kent Menefee (Bill), senior drill sergeant in the 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry Regiment. What an experience. The base was amazing, the people were kind, and just visiting Fort Benning made me feel proud to be an American. As most men who grew up playing with GI Joe as a child, I eagerly awaited the opportunity to see the M-2 Bradley, Black Hawk, and of course the guns (which my brother humorously educated me to the proper reference, a rifle.) As graduation began that morning, I would not be disappointed. Out of nowhere the grandstands were under attack. The air was filled with the sounds of machinegun fire, and as an enemy of the United States must feel when he comes in contact with the United States Army, I was frozen in time without a clear thought in my head. Smoke began to fill the courtyard, and then I heard an unforgettable sound. Like a lion moving in on its pray, an M-2 Bradley came roaring out of the tree line, and out of the back with total precision came six elite warriors. At that moment, I caught what is sure to be only a slight glimpse of the might our nation possesses. The Infantrymen lined the ground and began an assault that would consume any aggressor. As the smoke cleared, out came the Infantrymen, and out came in my heart a newfound respect for our military. There was a feeling inside that I could not explain, tears that I had to fight back from an unknown location. As the graduation proceeded, and the class began to march into position, anyone could see the discipline that had been "drilled" into these men. Total perfection. They approached like a hunter, an Eagle stalking the kill.

Like most of the American public, my vision of the United States Army was created by Hollywood. The Army to me was a well-trained group of men that could go into any situation, in any environment, and defeat any enemy, which of course the Army is (less the guns, excuse me, the rifles that can shoot 300 rounds without reloading).

But when the graduation ceremony ended that day, I learned that the Army is so much more than the single most powerful sword our country has. The Army prepares men and women to defend our country and freedom, to lay down their life for mine, to save and protect United States citizens and those people abroad who can't defend themselves against the evil in this world.

Whether you have noticed it or not, our drill sergeants have already achieved this goal well before the first bullet has been fired. I saw Infantrymen stand next to friends attending the ceremony, and they often times stood in sharp contrast. You could easily identify the difference between some of the graduating Infantrymen and their best friend from high school. I saw fathers standing proud, and heard the emotion from mothers thanking drill sergeants for changing the life of their son. Anyone could see the change. The Army has kept these men from life-changing temptations that some would have certainly faced in the future.

It has given them a new life that is dedicated to standing for righteousness, an opportunity to live with honor. Our drill sergeants have certainly saved the lives of many young men in our country, and they have improved the quality of our country in the process. To all drill sergeants, thank you for what you do. Thank you for dedicating your life to defend mine. Thank you for making this country a better place to live in. Thank you for saving the lives of many of the youth in our nation. Thank you for your courage, strength, dedication, discipline, and love for the United States of America. Thank you for helping me to understand what it means to be a patriot. Thank you

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