

ROTC | ROTC students cherish training experience for real life combat

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These outlets work in tandem with the Department of Defense and Army to develop individual plans for ROTC reserves. At Truman, the Military Science department's staff trains more than 200 Bulldog Battalion reserves from across the academic spectrum.

Many reserve troops enrolled in the program determine their individual path for military involvement through academic success and leadership potential, said Major Douglas J. Reinsch, executive officer and sophomore level instructor.

"A lot of these guys when they finish up that four years, they don't decide to go on," Reinsch said. "But you can ask any of them. None of them would trade that experience for anything."

This semester, 47 Truman students are contracted for Army duty, which includes 18 seniors, 13 juniors, 12 sophomores and four freshmen, he said.

"Good guys get what they want," Reinsch said. "The people that do the best here at Truman ... determine their branching."

His office serves as a testament to his military experience, the walls adorned with military memorabilia and personal achievements. He said he keeps in frequent contact with his former students and enjoys learning about their success on a larger scale.

Alumnus First Lieutenant Philip J. Smith said in an e-mail that he understands the importance of being previously enrolled in ROTC.

"This isn't your everyday job," Smith said. "There can be life-or-death situations. ROTC was the first step in teaching me how to make good decisions in high-stress environments."

While at the University, Smith attended a program in October 2003 at Mt. Warfare School in Edwards Proving Grounds, Vt., where his Ranger Challenge team took first place. He entered active Army duty in January 2005 at

Fort Still, Okla., reporting for the Field Artillery Officer Basic Course.

In the vein of Smith's training experiences, Scott spent the summer of his junior year in Fort Luis, Wash., where senior cadets nationwide congregated to complete Basic Officer Leadership Course I. The course lasted 35 days, and officers evaluated cadets' leadership skills.

Scott said one of the biggest challenges was dealing with a situation unfamiliar to him. To further his education, he attended airborne school in Fort Benning, Ga., for three weeks after his sophomore year. He said it mostly involved jumping out of planes.

"The first time I went to Georgia, at Fort Benning, I was on a base by myself, and I think that was probably the hardest thing for me," Scott said.

He said ROTC helped him overcome certain challenges.

"I think, though, ROTC has definitely given me the confidence to be more outgoing and talking to people I'm not familiar with and relying on their help," Scott said.

Scott said he will serve active duty for four years as stated on his contract but that he does not plan to make the Army his career. He said he likely would be stationed in a hospital serving in the medical branch, where he would oversee smooth operations by ensuring doctors are well-supplied and where they are supposed to be. As a second lieutenant, he would manage a platoon of about 40 men and women.

First Lieutenant Jeffrey T. Blankenship, another University alumnus, serves as a platoon leader with Bravo Battery stationed in Kabul, Afghanistan. In support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Blankenship operates the team in charge of Security Force for its compound. He said in an e-mail that ROTC serves as important training for the future.

"College prepares you for life out in the working world," Blankenship said. "ROTC prepares you for a life working to protect that world."

He said his ROTC experience provided him with the necessary skills as a leader and that he stresses the importance for current students.

"ROTC teaches them to use the experience of others to help them lead," Blankenship said. "Many training hours are spent teaching cadets to overcome the stresses of leadership."

Brossett said he hopes to serve with the engineer branch for the next four years and then apply to the Army's Funded Legal Education Program, which, if accepted, would pay for his education to become an Army lawyer.

Beach said the training that cadets receive at the University is just the basics.

"This is like their freshman year at college," Beach said. "When they're done here, they're going to get training and a lot more focused and intense training, and they're not going to be distracted by college life."

Beach said graduating seniors who are being deployed get additional training in two phases, including more theater-specific training and that the real learning begins at the soldiers' unit.

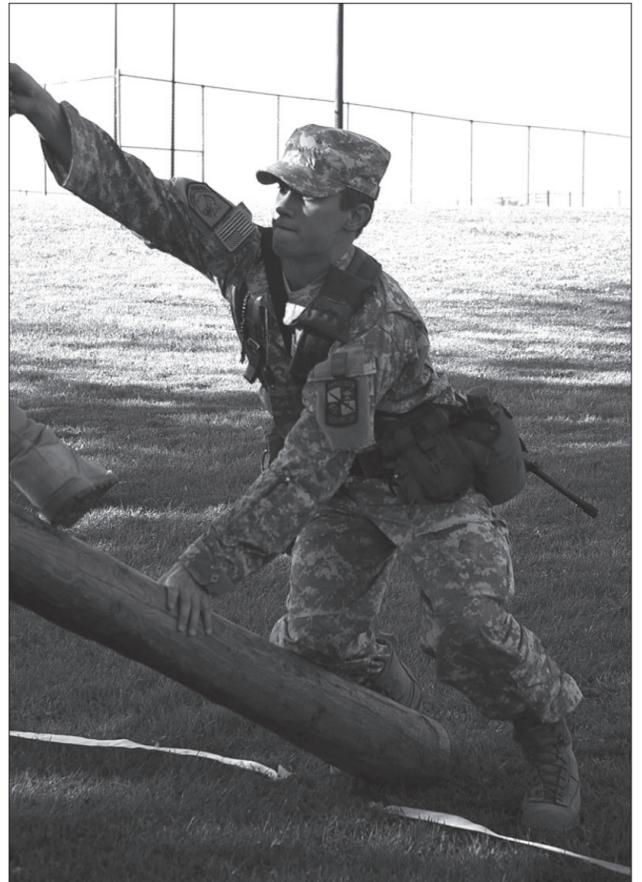
"When they get seasoned [non-commissioned officers] and troops that they're working with or even when they get on the ground, there's a sharp learning curve overseas," Beach said.

Scott and Brossett both received a Distinguished Merit Graduate, putting them in the top 10 percent on the national merit system.

Scott said 60 percent of the ranking process comes from grades, with 30 percent based on scores in Basic Officer Leadership Course I offered during the summer. The remaining 10 percent comes from on-campus events and extracurricular activities.

Captain Bill Gardner, scholarship enrollment officer, said an ROTC senior's biggest concern revolves around the point system that places him or her on the order of merit list.

About 4,500 cadets nationwide re-



Kyle Magee/for the Index

Sophomore Will Zasadny participates in the Fundamental Leader Reactionary Course simulation last Tuesday afternoon on the rugby field.

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WWII enthusiast collects history at home

BY JESSICA RAPP
Assistant Features Editor

The swastika carried a powerful message as the symbol of the Nazi Party during World War II. For some people, it meant hate and injustice. For others, it denoted loyalty and honor.

In the home of collector Mike Sapp, the swastika carries an entirely different meaning. At least three different black, white and red flags dominate his living room. For 10 years he has filled his space with an authentic WWII collection.

"It's just interesting," he said. "To me, somebody that just buys it because it's worth something is really not into it. To me, it's better to know the story behind it, what it's used for and who had it. It'd be great if they could tell me where they've been or what they've seen."

Sapp, who buys and sells antiques as a hobby, found motivation to concentrate his interest to the German aspect of WWII after hearing his great-uncle tell war stories. Sapp's great-uncle fought with the 103rd Cactus Division, a sector of the U.S. Army.

"Most of the stories are kind of hard to repeat," he said. "There's not much good to say about it."

With an easy glance, Sapp can identify every piece of his collection and tell its history. He said most of what he has accumulated came from either family members or war veterans. He finds these rare items — swords, army helmets, matches and political buttons — fascinating.

As Sapp pulls a gold-plated German bayonet off his wall,



Mark Hardy/Index

Kirksville resident Mike Sapp's World War II collectibles include a German fighter pilot helmet, spotter cards for identifying planes and pin-backs.

he points out that the owner must have re-finished the original for his kids. He sets it back in its place with numerous other weapons that belonged to German soldiers of various ranks. Sapp said German weapons and uniforms bore much more elaborate designs compared to the American weapons and uniforms from WWII.

Removing the cover of a Hitler's Youth dagger, for instance, shows the words engraved on the blade: Blut und Ehre, meaning

"blood and honor." An SA (Sturmabteilung, or storm trooper) dagger reads Alles fuer Deutschland, or "All for Germany." Sapp said the officers and soldiers received their original dagger as a reward for their service.

He said some of the more rare daggers are now worth between \$20,000 and \$60,000.

"You could buy daggers for \$7.50 and \$20 in the good old days," he said.

A men's tank, adjusted neatly on a mannequin stand, bears the

symbol of the SS, or the Schutzstaffel, the secret police.

"This is an SS sports shirt," Sapp said. "This would have been worn by an SS man during sport activity, like for working out or track and field events. I got this from a vet's family member."

Under a display of hard-to-find WWII pins sits a box of what looks like a battleship set. However, the models actually served as a training kit for soldiers so that they could tell the difference

between the Allies' ships and the transportation ships like the Queen Mary or Liberty. Similar and harder-to-find sets were made to help soldiers identify the ships of the Axis Powers.

He said the army also issued decks of cards for civilians to help them identify different types of war planes.

"It was a totally different world back then than it is now," he said. "People are spoiled now."

The box of boats sits directly in front of a case of mint, unused World War I "skull crackers," or trench knives with spiked handles.

"The Americans used these in trench warfare," Sapp said. "It was a bloody war. About as bad as the Civil War."

Sapp's collection also encompasses German playing cards, "sweetheart" pillow covers bearing pictures of soldiers, candy dishes, matchbook covers and political propaganda.

An American pin-back that Sapp now owns depicts Uncle Sam tugging a rope tying Hitler to a tree. As Sapp toggles a metal lever on the side of the pin, Hitler bounces up and down in front of a sign that reads "Let's Pull Together." Sapp said the pin-back would be now worth about \$100.

"Last year I found a book-mark that's got the Nazi pennant on one corner, all hand stitched," he said. "It was really neat. I found that at a yard sale."

Sapp said only a few of the items he buys come from Kirksville yard sales. He said his family and friends who know he collects will sell him different pieces and that this way he knows it is authentic. He said that sometimes

he will make purchases through online organizations. Sapp said he will make decisions based on what the item could be worth but that he often buys simply because he thinks the antique is cool or has a special meaning to him.

"There's so many different fields of that time period you can collect," Sapp said. "It gets too expensive to collect everything. That's why I sold some of my Japanese stuff. It's not as pretty as the German stuff — the Japanese were pretty 'plain Jane' too."

Sophomore history major Mark Gawriluk said WWII's extreme impact on society makes relics from the war significantly valuable. Gawriluk said he has his own small collection of WWII German and American helmets, daggers and leftover artillery shells.

"[WWII] needs to be remembered so we don't make that same mistake again," he said. "It was a dark period in our history, and the memorabilia helps us remember that period of time."

Sapp manages a booth at Dee's Good Old Days Antique Mall where he keeps business cards advertising his hobby. Deloris Mergenstern, owner of the Antique Mall, said Sapp sells a variety of items in his booth, but he keeps his WWII collection his own.

"He's been at it for quite a while, long before I've been around," she said.

Surrounded by eclectic treasures from many eras and genres, Sapp said he takes the most pride in his slice of WWII history.

"To me, it's the fun of the chase to find this stuff," he said. "There's only a limited supply of it."

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