



CDT Loerwald (MS1) on the Color Guard team for March To The Grave.

# Bearkat BATTALION

April | 2020 | Sam Houston State University

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## Overcoming Adversity!

Our Bearkats remain resilient during these unprecedented times (COVID-19). We are upholding the SHSU motto, "The measure of a Life is its Service" by remaining focused, while adhering to DoD Health Regulations. Our Cadets are controlling what they can control by focusing on academics and maintaining their physical fitness. This newsletter is shorter in length; however, we have included pictures from the entire academic year that have not been published. We hope you enjoy this newsletter and appreciate everyone's support.

**Eat'em Up Kats!**

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## PMS Comments

We appreciate your continued support and flexibility, as we face many challenges, mentoring and training our future leaders during these unprecedented times. Our staff has over 170 years of active federal service experience and approximately 20 combat deployments; however, we have never faced an obstacle of this nature. I am fortunate to have a staff of professionals, who adapted to train your Cadets and did so magnificently, utilizing remote learning. As impressive are your Cadets, as 95% of them remain engaged during our remote sessions.

One of our main tasks with remote learning is to ensure our Cadets are mentally engaged. Thank you to the following leaders who addressed and provided mentorship to our Cadets the past few weeks during our remote sessions, keeping our Cadets engaged: Dr. Dana Hoyt, Morgan Luttrell, Command Sergeant Major (Retired) Mark Cook, Sergeant Major Eric Arredondo, Major (Promotable) James Bithorn, Major Cameron Smith, Captain Bobbie Ragsdale, and 2nd Lieutenant Jose Arriaga. Our Cadet Mentorship Program has been crucial during these difficult times, as all of us are dispersed. Senior Cadets Hunter Lewis and Samanta Lopez deserve credit for the refinement and improvement of the Cadet Mentorship Program this academic year, as our mentees our comfortable in engaging their mentors as required. However, my predecessor, LTC Mark Davis and the previous Cadet Mentorship OICs, also deserve credit, for formally codifying and improving the Cadet Mentorship Program – Thank you!

Unfortunately, we have cancelled the majority of our R.O.T.C. events, as we adhere to Department of Defense social distance directives. Among these cancelled events was the Bataan Death March on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, where twelve of our most determined Cadets had trained their bodies for the rigors of this 26-mile marathon, since the beginning of the semester. We also sent a letter to our donors last week, officially cancelling the R.O.T.C. Spring Awards Ceremony. We are grateful for our donors, as they continue to support our Cadets with scholarships, despite the cancellation of the awards ceremony. The Cadets selected for these scholarships are very much deserving and truly appreciate the support our donors continue to provide during these difficult times. They are looking forward to thanking you individually via a personal note.

We are in the process of planning our Spring Commissioning Ceremony for 13 deserving young men and women. We will execute the ceremony virtually on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, and promise to make it as special for our families as if conducted in a live setting. Finally, we are continuing our recruiting efforts and our incoming cohort is coming together nicely with four national scholarship winners and two green to gold winners, among the talented young leaders, attending SHSU in the Fall Semester of 2020. We are pleased with the progression of our Cadets and program this year and will continue to seek improvement, despite the current environment. Please stay safe.

### Strength and Honor!

Lieutenant Colonel Joe Contreras



SHSU President Dr. Dana Hoyt addresses the MS3 class during its class via Zoom.



## MS1 Cadet- Brendan Smith

I feel a massive amount of gratitude to every single cadet in the program for making it the way it is. I almost decided not to attend Sam Houston State University, because I was nominated to attend the United States Military Academy West Point. After receiving good advice from LTC Contreras and my mentor, Hunter Lewis, I got the feeling that the ROTC program here would be more beneficial.

Physical training was a major adjustment for me, but I was always motivated by the cadets around to continue to push myself to become better. I enjoy the Military Science classes because MSG Mitchell has been a quality instructor to the MS1s, and I am always being given valuable guidance at lab and physical training. Ranger Challenge, Color Guard, and Ranger Company, have given me a vast amount of exposure and opportunity to gain friends within the program. However, Ranger Challenge has been an experience unlike any other this semester. The physical training every single morning, the extra labs and classes, have by far been the most impactful for me. The tactical instruction is very helpful and it has taught me to put “We” over “Me” every time. I believe this training is going to be very useful as I progress in the Bearkat Battalion and when I eventually attend Advanced Camp.

All of these parts of ROTC have allowed me to form relationships with many people and I am very grateful for that. I’m super excited about my future within my program because of how great my experience has been thus far. Also, shout out to “The Boys” for being such great friends, and encouraging me to do better in every aspect.

Strength and Honor!



CDT Smith as a member of the Push Up team for the Battle of Piney Woods.



CDT Smith and fellow MS1 cadets.





## MS2 Cadet Crystal Manzanares

I came into this program not knowing what to expect. From lab to physical training, it was all a new experience for me. I do not regret my decision to join as I have enjoyed the experience and everything that I have learned. Being in the Army is something, I never thought about doing, before coming to Sam Houston State University. I made the decision to join ROTC after speaking with one of my friends who enlisted coming out of high school. She recommended that I look into becoming an Army officer, because if she had the opportunity to do so she would have proceeded via this route. Coming to Sam Houston State University has always been a dream of mine, because I have always wanted to pursue a career in Criminal Justice. Once I arrived, I sought out more information about the Bearkat Battalion and decided to give it a try.

Being in the program has taught me so many things. Not only about what it means to be leader, but how to become a better version of myself. Progressing from an MSI to an MSII in one semester has not been easy, but I am grateful to have people around me that I can turn to that are willing to assist when needed. Venturing out of my comfort zone has been challenging as I am a very reserved person, but it has shown me that I am capable of more than I ever thought. By far, one of the most exhilarating things I've done is rappel down a building. I am so excited to see what other fun things, I am able to experience while being in the program. I am grateful for the things that I have been taught by the cadets and cadre in the program, and I cannot wait to see what the future has in store, not only for me, but for everyone else in the program as well! Finally, I am fortunate that I was recently recommended to receive a 2-year scholarship!



CDT Manzanares during the rappel lab.



CDT Manzanares learning how to tie her swiss seat.



## MS3 Cadet Alex Rocha



CDT Rocha (Left) and peers receiving their Army summer internships.

Leadership, duty and honor are common themes within the U.S. Army. Leadership, is a main topic when helping develop cadets. Duty and honor are mentioned frequently as well, because they are two of the seven Army Values. For most of my life; I believe I have been behind the curve on understanding the meaning of those three words. It wasn't until much later in life, that I began to form my own meanings. First, came my understanding of duty. This was followed by honor, and lastly leadership.

My first year as an MS1, our instructor MSG Carter, taught us about the Seven Army Values. At the time, I believed I understood the meaning of duty. Fulfilling your obligations to the team seemed like an easy enough task to understand. Once I was a contracted MS3, I decided to take our tactical labs as seriously as I could. During the fall semester I was leading my platoon on an ambush and we failed to identify a fallen enemy. Consequently, we ended up taking two casualties. If that had been real, I would have lost two people under my command. As I continued to reflect, a memory from my childhood

came to mind. I was about 11 years old, visiting my grandfather in the VA hospital after his triple bypass. My family and I were eating lunch in the hospital cafeteria when multiple individuals showed up being pushed in wheelchairs. Most of them had lost multiple limbs and one lost all. My father was seated in front of me and I noticed he began to tear up. In my youthful ignorance, I asked "Dad, are you crying?" He said nothing to me and went to use the restroom. My mother scolded me for my lack of tact, but I had no idea. Later on I learned my father had served as a MEDEVAC pilot for his first couple deployments and most likely witnessed those injuries first hand, and had the duty to transport them. It wasn't until this aforementioned experience that I understood this memory. Duty does not just encompass serving my nation and doing a job. I have a duty to care for them and protect them just as my father had.

The meaning of honor was taught to me by my grandmother. In the Korean culture, honor is a very important quality. She came to this country as an immigrant married to a U.S. Soldier. She gives to others, even though she has little herself, and refuses anything in return. A year ago, on my birthday she gave me two-hundred dollars. I called her and promised to recompense her for her kindness once I commission. She just laughed and said to me "no one should be rewarded for doing what's expected." This is a simple sentence that holds a lot of meaning to me today. There is no tangible reward for doing the right thing. Living a life of honor and integrity is the reward in itself. I vow to be an honorable leader for my Soldiers and set the example for my subordinates, and expect no reward in return.

Leadership, is something I was born without unfortunately. I am not a very loud and energetic person. I am not the fastest, strongest or smartest person. I don't always find all five points on land navigation, nor do I always shoot 40/40. During my years in ROTC, I drilled into my mind that this criterion is what makes a great leader. I have been told many times that without these qualities, I will not be a worthy leader. That these tasks determine leadership qualities just like your zodiac sign determines your personality. Eventually, I concluded that this is not true. At the end of the day it's about how well you treat your peers and subordinates. Like LTC Contreras told me in my own evaluation. "At the end of the day it's about your Soldiers." Now, I believe that ability doesn't necessarily make a great leader, but responsibility does. How well can a leader manage the responsibility of caring for his Soldiers and millions of dollars of equipment and still complete the mission. Instead of trying to be the best, make others the best. That is what leadership means to me.





## MS4 Cadet Brett Leasure

I joined ROTC in the fall of 2016, which was my freshman year of college. I have known since the eighth grade that joining the military was my career path and that ROTC would be the pathway I used. My senior year of high-school I applied for a scholarship and received a few offers from various schools. I visited each school that offered me one, and decided to attend Sam Houston State University. Upon visiting the campus, I knew that I wanted to join the Bearkat Battalion, because of how friendly the cadets were. During my freshman year, I focused on getting into good physical shape, so that I was able to pass the Army Physical Fitness Test. Not only was I able to eventually pass the APFT, but I also improved 7 minutes in my two-mile run time and executed the maximum repetition of sit-ups for my age category.

I was also fortunate enough during this time to also be the Vice President of a volunteer organization with a fellow cadet, Hunter Lewis, where we were able to plan and execute many volunteering opportunities and give back to the community. Over the years I have also participated in the: Rifle Team, which has annually received first place at the Piney Woods Shootout, Ranger Challenge, Cannon Crew, Color Guard, and being Captain of the ROTC Intramural Softball Team. My campus and organizational involvement has kept me busy over the years and has developed me into the person I am today.

Army ROTC has provided me training opportunities every summer since I have joined the program. I attended Basic Camp in the summer of my freshman year, I was a member of the Opposing Force for Advanced Camp the summer of my sophomore year, and I attended Advanced Camp and an Army Forensics Internship the summer of my junior year. I was able to learn so much from these trainings and it really helped to develop my confidence. I believe that as a traditional cadet, I received a lot of insight and experience that helped me progress as well as learn from the mistakes of others. Thank you to all the members of the Bearkat Battalion who have assisted in my growth, and I will use all of the skills I have learned when I commission as a Military Police Officer!



CDT Leasure as a lane walker during a tactical lab.



CDT Leasure receiving his Military Police Officer branch assignment.





## The Year in Pictures:



Cadets with Dr. Biskupska, WW2 professor, on Staff Ride.



Cadets learning battle drills at lab



CDT Chudej qualifying as an expert shooter.



CDT Way during tactics instruction.



MS1 cadets at the SHSU Inaugural Branch Day.



Cadets mentoring students at the Hornet Success Academy Huntsville





## Year In Pictures continued...



CDT Maldonado successfully completes Air Assault school.



The MS3 class complete a 6-mile ruck march in preparation for Advanced Camp.



MS1 Cadets Dieck and Dene during Field Leaders Reaction Course.



CDT Zirkel during Land navigation lab.





## Blast from the Past Darrell Wayne McCracken '77



Darrell Wayne McCracken came to SHSU after graduating from Klein High School in 1973. He was in ROTC his first two years at SHSU and then went into the USMC PLC program. He graduated and was commissioned in USMC in 1977.

In 1978, he went to the Basic Officer Training and the Strategic Armed Forces Intelligence School. From 1979 to 1981 he was S2 and Scout Sniper Platoon Commander for 1BN 2ND Marines and 2ND BN 2ND Marines. From 1981 to 1983 he was S2 4TH Recon BN, USMC Reserve and was promoted to CPT.

He was worked for TDCJ since 1983, and resided in Huntsville, TX at the time of his death.

