

## Joseph Clark: Soldier, Brother, Friend

by Henry Clark

After watching lots of strangers walk past, I finally saw him walking down concourse B, just beyond the security checkpoint and heading toward where we were waiting in the airport terminal. The gold letters on his black t-shirt said “TOO EASY,” and his hair was the shortest I’d ever seen him wear it. He had been gone for eleven weeks – forever! – and seeing him again was one of my happiest moments ever.

I’m talking about my oldest brother, Cadet (soon-to-be 2nd Lieutenant) Joseph Clark. He has done things I never thought about anyone doing. I certainly never thought that the guy who slept in the room next to mine could do so much and work so hard serving in the U.S. Army Reserve and become an active duty Army officer.

Joseph enlisted in the Army Reserve when he was a 17 year-old in high school. His job MOS is 88M Motor Transport Operator. That means he drives 22-wheelers and moves equipment across the country. Being in the Army Reserve and in the ROTC helped him pay for college and it kept him really busy. In a few months he will graduate from Old Dominion University and commission as an officer.

Joseph started basic training at Ft. Jackson on May 26, 2020, during the Covid-19 scare. He told me that restrictions and masks made basic training a lot harder. “We did a lot more ruck marches and we spent a lot more nights in the field than would normally

be required,” he said. Buses couldn’t be used to transport the recruits because no one wanted the virus to break out on base.

After basic training, Joseph had to return for his senior year of high school. He went to drill every month and sometimes missed school events because of his military duties.

The following summer he spent nine weeks at Ft. Leonard Wood for Advanced Individual Training. For five years his breaks from school were usually devoted to military duties such as: going to drill, driving equipment to New Mexico, the ROTC Ranger Challenge, Guardian Response, Air Assault School, and Advanced Camp Cadet Summer Training.

Joseph told me that his proudest moment so far in the Army was from the summer of 2023 when he graduated from Air Assault School in the top 5% of his class. Air Assault school is nicknamed “the toughest 10 days in the Army” (Cruz). The purpose of the school is “to train Soldiers in Air Assault operations, sling-load operations, and rappelling” (“U.S. Army Fort Campbell: Air Assault”). Air assault school challenged Joseph mentally and physically with written tests and physically demanding climbs and rappelling.

“I joined the Army because I saw it as my calling to lead soldiers into combat,” Joseph told me. The thing Joseph wanted to do the most in the Army was to have a positive impact on other people. I asked him if he has ever had any second thoughts about joining the Army and he said, “I have not had second thoughts about joining the Army. I

have had second thoughts about becoming an officer, due to my desire to help lower-ranked enlisted soldiers, but I realize now that I can have a greater impact on them as an officer.” Joseph is glad that he served as an enlisted soldier first. He said he will be a better informed officer when he goes active duty. It seems like Joseph has never thought about himself during his journey, but only about others and what he can do for them and for his country. Joseph will have an impact on all he serves with.

Joseph inspires me to be the best I can be not just by his example but also just by the way he acts towards other people and what he demands of me. Whenever he came home from training or drill, Joseph always made time for me. He has always taken me places, picked me up from school, and done more things with me in the past 5 years than I can remember. And when we are together he demands my best 24/7, whether we are throwing a football or lacrosse ball, wrestling, or even playing video games, he makes sure that I do my best always. If I throw a ball poorly or don't catch a ball that I should have caught, he likes to drill sergeant me and make me do push ups. And he does this while joking around and having a good time.

My brother Joseph is the best brother of all. He is a veteran of the Army Reserve and will soon be active duty in the Army. He works harder than most people will ever work. He demands the best from everyone and is kind and loving to his family and friends, but extremely dangerous to his country's enemies. I love him so much.

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