CAPTAIN’S CORNER

Greetings from the Jayhawk Navy!

Our battalion has completed another successful semester. As you will read in the articles, our midshipmen and staff were extremely busy through community, university, and other external affairs. We began the semester welcoming 12 new midshipmen through our New Student Orientation.

This year we held a successful “Alumni and Family Tailgate,” and enjoyed everyone’s company. We also resurrected the “Commanders Cup” competition between the ROTC branches. These events provide valuable training, experience, and camaraderie for the midshipmen.

This semester we conducted the first-ever, Nicholas Andrew Herren Memorial Run. With the loss of MIDN Herren last year, we have honored his memory, culminating in this memorial run. MIDN Herren’s shipmates have, and will continue, to carry on his spirit as they continue towards their careers as officers in the Navy and Marine Corps.

Looking forward, we have many fun events in the works for next semester. Our main focus is on our drill meet at the University of Colorado in March. The Jayhawk Battalion has been on an upward trend over the last few years, and we have our eyes on the coveted 1st place overall finish. Our Awards Ceremony is scheduled for April 26th, as always a good time to recognize members of the battalion for their hard work, and Joint Commissioning Ceremony will be May 14th.

Rock Chalk and Go Navy!

CAPT Dave Meron

9/11 Ceremony

MIDN 3/C Alex Speckin

On 11 September 2001, I was only four years old, and all I could comprehend was that something bad had happened. I did not understand the magnitude of what was occurring, and it was not until years later that I fully grasped the true significance of what had taken place that day. I soon realized why the events of September 11th changed America, chiefly how hopeless Americans felt from these events caused by only a few people. From that day on, the United States vowed to never let that happen again, and to always remember those lost that fateful day.

Midshipmen and Cadets present the colors at the Campanile for the 9/11 ceremony.

On September 11th of this year, I was lucky enough to command the color guard that would present the colors for the University of Kansas’s 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony. I could not help but think about the men and women who lost their lives, and how my actions that day would pay homage to the sacrifice of thousands. In true military fashion, the color guard and I arrived at the Campanile monument honoring KU Alumni lost in WWII 90 minutes before the event started. We practiced again to ensure that our performance would not dishonor those we had come to pay tribute to. We stood there at attention
aside the Campanile waiting for our cue and when it finally came, I began to maneuver the color guard to the front of the Campanile. When we halted, and the colors were presented, sixteen bells rang in remembrance of the sixteen years since the tragedy. My thoughts centered on the purpose of the attacks on September 11th, 2001, which were to bring terror and fear to our nation. Instead, sixteen years later, the American flag stood tall and proud. Being able to be part of that event that day made me realize that no matter the magnitude of the challenges our country faces, nothing will stop that flag from flying.

**Nicholas Andrew Herren Memorial Run**

**MIDN 2/C Cameron Wolf**

The KU Naval ROTC was blessed by the example set by Nicholas Andrew Herren. Nick Herren tragically lost his life in a car accident on the 27th of November 2016 during his senior year at KU. As a member of the KU NROTC Battalion, MIDN Herren’s legacy is marked by his exemplary teaching; compassion for everyone; his humor that could turn the worst of days into the best of days; his humility; his devotion to country, his family, his friends and God; and his selfless personality. Nick Herren exemplified what it meant to be a leader.

Saturday, the 23rd of September, KU NROTC honored Nick’s legacy through the first annual Nicholas Andrew Herren Memorial Run. A Marine Corps team composed of 10 members within the unit raced a 10-person Navy team, relay style, from the Military Science Building in Lawrence, to his home in Alma Kansas, 72 miles away.

Despite a close race, with both teams averaging a 6-minute mile pace, the Marine Corps team arrived in Alma first by 6 minutes. Once in Alma, the unit held a BBQ with the Herren family and friends.

After the BBQ, the unit ran through the city of Alma to visit Nick’s headstone. The event concluded with the Unit hiking to Nick’s favorite spot atop a hill overlooking Mill Creek, where his father built a bench for Nick. The unit laid a plaque commemorating the event. KU NROTC Commanding Officer Captain David Meron said “The Nick Herren Memorial Run is an opportunity to remember and honor Nick’s legacy as well as display our values of teamwork, friendship and family.” This event culminated from a tremendous amount of work from the active duty, and midshipmen staff. Rest in Peace, Nick.

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**Life as a MECEP**

**Gunnery Sergeant Matt Gant**

The Marine Enlisted Commissioning Education Program, or MECEP, is a program that allows exceptionally qualified enlisted Marines to become an Officer. Once selected, Marines must successfully complete a 10-week Officer Candidate Course at Officer Candidate School - Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia. After completion, Marines attend a university with a Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps or an affiliated school.
One of the best aspects of MECEP is that active duty enlisted Marines are thrown into the mix with your average, every-day student enrolled in the Naval ROTC program. Even as a full-time, active duty student, I have the ability to dictate a majority of my schedule, allowing me much needed time spent with my family. Marines in MECEP must enroll in a minimum of 12 credits per semester, and transferring from the Fleet Marine Forces, this is a bit of a slower pace than I am accustomed to, for which I am grateful. This experience has given me the opportunity to walk my daughter to and from school, spend evenings with my family, and even go on a few “date nights” with my wife. I am very appreciative for being selected into such a prestigious program, being accepted by the University of Kansas, and for the opportunity to assist the staff in transforming these midshipmen from students into officers.

My Officer Candidate Experience

Officer Candidate Eric Gustafson

Rewarding. This one word is sufficient to describe my time thus far as an Officer Candidate at the University of Kansas. It was an honor to be selected to take part in the Seaman to Admiral, STA-21, program and I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity. I am also rewarded through my membership in the KU NROTC program. To see young men and women who were in high school less than one year ago wearing the uniform, standing in formation, and building camaraderie with one another is an uncommon picture. As a prior enlisted Sailor, I often find myself looking for ways I can contribute to the development of the midshipmen. One truly memorable experience was teaching a Navy Lab on Damage Control. In the fleet as a prior junior enlisted Sailor, it was my first experience in teaching my peers, and it was a proud moment for me because I saw first-hand how my enlisted experience directly contributed to the training of future naval officers. For me, this idea of peers teaching peers goes both ways. As a junior enlisted Sailor, I do not have a lot of leadership experience in the military, as I did not typically find myself in charge of evolutions or training in the fleet. While I may have valuable experience to share with the midshipmen about what life in the fleet is like, many of them have valuable leadership experience to share with me. Over the next two and a half years, I look forward to future opportunities where I can contribute to the development of my peers, while at the same time recognizing that the midshipmen contribute to my own development.

Alumni and Family Tailgate

MIDN 4/C Tristan Miller

A crucial support mechanism for military members is our families. The alumni and family tailgate, held every October, is an opportunity for friends and family to get to know one another within the unit. This year, the active duty and midshipmen staff invited friends, family, and
alumni to breakfast before the KU game against Texas Tech, creating a fun atmosphere for all to enjoy. The Army and Air Force ROTC members were also invited and encouraged to bring their families along with them.

The event as a whole was a success. We were fortunate enough to have great weather throughout the morning, albeit a little chilly. Many battalion members showed up and brought family members along. Some people even brought their dogs to join in on the fun! This year we had many different types of pastries, as well as fruit platters, donuts, and, best of all, hot coffee to keep everyone warm during the chilly morning.

Alum and Midshipmen interact over refreshments.

Having alumni present allowed for us current midshipmen to connect with Jayhawks of past. This year we were very fortunate to have alumnus, Mr. Phil Wilkes, class of 1966, attend. Mr. Wilkes was a Surface Warfare Officer that served aboard the USS O’Brien (DD-725) during the Vietnam War. We enjoyed learning from, and hearing about his experiences in the Navy.

For me personally, this event was a ton of fun. I learned a lot from the alumni who came, as well as the upperclassmen in the battalion. A few of my fellow freshmen and I had a great conversation with MIDN 2/C Wenske and MIDN 1/C Hines over a hot cup of coffee, giving us the inside scoop on how to be successful in the battalion. But it was not all just business, we all had some fun talks too; trading funny stories from previous years in the unit and at our New Student Orientations. I would like to thank everyone who came out to support this event and would like to extend an invitation for everyone to join us again next year!

Navy Birthday and SDB Inspection

MIDN 2/C Scott Gilmore

The United States Navy was born on 13 October 1775, and every year on this day, service members come together in order to celebrate the birth of the strongest navy in history, the Jayhawk Battalion is no different. The battalion began its’ celebration with a Service Dress Blues inspection. All the midshipmen, OCs, and MECEPs of the battalion spent the night before the inspection going over their uniforms, ensuring all their devices and awards properly fit, and shining their shoes so that they gleamed like mirrors. Many of the freshman class were nervous while preparing for their first time in the Service Dress Blues uniform, and many questions were given to upper-class midshipmen by the underclassmen to prepare themselves for both the uniform inspection and knowledge questions. Due to all this preparation, the battalion had a successful inspection.

After the inspection, the battalion gathered around the Navy birthday cake in order to conduct a cake cutting ceremony. To signify the passage of knowledge and continuance of naval tradition and excellence, the oldest and youngest Sailors in attendance cut the cake together and the first piece is presented to the youngest member by the senior Sailor. This year the cake was cut by CAPT David Meron, the Commanding Officer, and MIDN 4/C Coates.
I hold these two events to be of the upmost importance for the battalion as both future service members and future naval officers. October 13\textsuperscript{th} is not only a day to celebrate the birth of the service, but also a day to reflect on its history, both its successes and failures, and all those who have gone before us to fight for the values that we still protect today. As officers and leaders, we will be observed by both superiors and subordinates and we will set the standard for our Sailors, and so we must be prepared to be the very best in everything that we do.

\section*{NASCAR Fundraiser}

\textbf{MIDN 4/C Jacob Allen}

On October 21\textsuperscript{st} and 22\textsuperscript{nd}, the KU NROTC unit conducted our semi-annual fund-raising event: working at the Kansas Speedway during the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup series. This has been one of the largest fundraisers for the battalion for many years now, and is no simple task. The event takes a high level of coordination between all who are involved, from those who plan the event, to those working the event. As a small battalion of less than forty midshipmen, MECEPs and OCs, there was no allotted room for error. The unit, working together, started both Saturday, and Sunday by mustering at the Military Science Building at 0400. From there, we traveled to the racetrack in Kansas City. Although, each person had a different role to play throughout each day, together we accomplished the goal of giving race comers a welcoming first impression through team-work and a positive mindset, despite the cold, wet October mornings. Throughout the weekend, the amount of camaraderie rises between the MECEPs, OCs, and midshipmen. Through this event, we were able to raise funds which will allow us to hold events like our annual Military Ball and Dining Out.

\section*{Halloween PT}

\textbf{MIDN 3/C Tabor Belcher}

For Halloween, KU Naval ROTC hosted KU Air Force ROTC for a friendly dodgeball tournament. Before the sun was up, the midshipmen and cadets made their way to Robinson Courts in the uniform of the day: a Halloween costume, and prepared for the competition. Even the Commanding Officer of NROTC, Captain Meron, put on his red power ranger t-shirt and came to see the tournament. Before the start of the event, NROTC AMOI SSgt Cobos, dressed as Forrest Gump, laid out the rules of the game. He divided everyone into two NROTC teams and two AFROTC teams. The courts were open, ready, for the game, and the midshipmen lined up opposite the cadets, waiting to hear the word “go.” Once the game began, both sides engaged in friendly competition. Bob Ross and Indiana Jones threw balls at sleeveless sailors, while Gru from Despicable Me stood by as the referee to one game, with Forrest Gump watching over the other.

After a few warm up games had been played, the midshipmen and cadets sent 10 of their players to one of the courts for a more official game, with
bragging rights at stake. The game began, and a few Airforce cadets were quickly eliminated, but then slowly, one by one, the midshipmen were taken out, until only The Indiana Jones, usually known as MIDN 3/C Heyroth, stood alone against seven cadets. He gained composure and slowly started to gather up the balls the cadets threw in an attempt to tag him out. Then, he began his hunt. Slowly but surely, he picked off every last one of them to lead NROTC into victory over AFROTC. Not wanting to be outdone, the Air Force called for another match, and sadly, Air Force cadets came out on top in that round. For the last game of the day, the freshman midshipman and cadets played against each other. In the end, the midshipmen took out the cadets to prove themselves as the superior freshman class. Overall, it was a great event.

Salute To Service Game

MIDN 2/C Cameron Wolf

The day began with the Jayhawk Battalion meeting at the Military Science Building, to enjoy a breakfast hosted by Air Force ROTC. While some students handed out programs, the remaining students walked to the stadium together.

During the National Anthem, complete with a fly-over from United States Air Force T-38 trainers, many of the midshipmen and cadets in attendance got the chance to hold a massive American flag on the field. Big Jay and Baby Jay—the KU mascots—joined the ROTC students in the stands after donning their uniforms. Spirits were high as the Jayhawk Battalion cheered while their football team kicked off. KU came into Saturday’s game as a 10-point underdog, and fought hard against the Baylor Bears. The three services sent five representatives to perform push-ups after every KU score. The ROTC members were able to show their military pride for their fellow students, and had a great time enjoying the camaraderie. A slew of veterans were introduced during the game to a resounding standing ovation. Midshipmen and cadets held their spirits high throughout, despite a KU loss to Baylor. Several midshipmen had the privilege of meeting former KU Football great, Gilbert Brown, “The Gravedigger,” who was also honored at the game.

This game provided the battalion an excellent opportunity to grow closer together. We were able to integrate ourselves with the Lawrence community while in uniform, representing the

Some members of the Jayhawk Battalion pose with the KU Dance Team.

Midshipmen interact with KU football alum “The Gravedigger” during the game.
Navy and Marine Corps in outstanding fashion. The Jayhawk Family had a great time paying tribute to our veterans and their sacrifice for the United States of America.

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**Marine Corps Birthday**

MIDN 3/C Sean Donovan

November 10, 2017 marks the Marine Corps 242nd birthday—242 years of warfighting excellence from locations all over the globe, including Trenton, Tripoli, Chapultepec and so many more. Marines fight from an inner spirit within their hearts unmatched to any other of the services, which makes every November 10th a very special date. It is a time to remember who we are, our history, and our purpose. A time to reflect on the past, remember our fallen, and focus on continuing the fight.

This year, the University of Kansas Naval ROTC unit began celebrating the Marine Corps’ birthday with the cake cutting ceremony. It is tradition that the oldest and youngest Marine in the room share a piece of the cake to represent the passing of wisdom and knowledge from one Marine to the next, a continuous cycle that will forever keep the core values of honor, courage, and commitment alive within the Marine Corps. This year, KU NROTC Marine Officer Instructor, Capt Mosqueda, and MIDN 4/C Miller had the honor of cutting and sharing the piece of cake. That evening, at the KU Basketball game against Tennessee State, ROTC midshipmen and cadets presented the colors before the game, and our own AMOI, SSgt Cobos, was recognized during the game for his thirteen years of service to the Marine Corps! Oohrah and Rock Chalk!

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**Veterans Day**

MIDN 3/C Timothy Cooper

November 11th, Veterans Day, is a day when we all take a moment out of our busy schedules to honor the men and women who served in the military to defend this great nation. Each year, the KU Army, Air Force, and Naval ROTC units gather together to stand watch for 24 hours to honor our veterans. This year, under the direction of the Naval ROTC, the cadets and midshipmen from the three units once again worked together in front of the Campanile WWII memorial from 1000 Saturday November 11th to 1000 Sunday November 12th. During this 24 hour period, two midshipmen or cadets stood watch over the memorial in honor of those who had gone before.

To start the day of long rotations, the Army ROTC posted two cadets at the Campanile Memorial. Despite the typical, cold November weather, all the cadets and midshipmen stood
resolute. Prior to their watch, all cadets and midshipmen met at the Naval ROTC Learning Resource Center in the Military Science Building. The Naval ROTC active duty students then took two watch-standers and dropped them off at the Campanile memorial. When it was my turn and after a proper relief and turnover, MIDN 4/C Allen and I took the post to guard the Campanile WWII memorial. An hour of the watch was not a long period of time, but it gave me a chance to show my respect to those who served before me.

Sir Isaac Newton once said, “If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.” This Vigil gives the students of ROTC a better look at our purpose here at KU. We are here to eventually become military officers, who will take care of our Sailors and Marines while honoring the men and women who came before us. For me, this experience truly reminds me of the giants who came before us. For me, this experience truly helped us become the greatest country and military in the world.

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**Joint Service Ball**

**MIDN 2/C Kathleen Meeds**

On 9 November 2017, members of the University of Kansas’ Naval ROTC Battalion attended the annual Joint Services Ball at the Jayhawk Club, a new country club in Lawrence. The three ROTC branches at KU take turns hosting the JSB every year, and Army was in charge this fall. The evening began with a social hour, and progressed into a dinnercomplete with traditional military ceremonies, including the presentation of the colors, a POW and MIA table, toasts, a guest speaker, and the singing of the service songs. At the conclusion of the formal ceremony, midshipmen, cadets, and their dates took to the dance floor. “I really like the service songs more than anything,” said MIDN 4/C Allen. “For me, as a part of the smallest unit out of the three ROTC units here, there’s a lot of pride and a lot of camaraderie that goes into it. We belt out the songs louder than the services that have over a hundred people each. It gave me chills and makes me happy that I chose the Navy.” After the guests enjoyed a southern-comfort-style buffet, Army Colonel Kenneth D. McRae, this year’s guest speaker, talked of service and its importance. Col McRae has been the Chief of Indo-Pacific Division since 2014. Upon conclusion of his speech, Army ROTC’s Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Tracey Olsen, also gave her remarks and thanked all of the guests for attending that evening. MIDN 3/C Speckin said that JSB is a great opportunity for members of Naval ROTC to bond, and that it strengthens personal relationships that already exist between branches. That being said, he wishes to see more camaraderie between branches at the event itself. Naval ROTC is hosting next year, and midshipmen are already brainstorming as to how they can make it even better.

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**Commanders’ Cup**

**MIDN 2/C Cameron Wolf**

On 16 November, the ROTC units at KU reinstated the Commanders’ Cup, a fitness competition held between the Army, Air Force, and Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps. This Commanders’ Cup was the first in many years, and is a long-standing tradition within the military to promote camaraderie and teamwork.
Each ROTC unit’s members met at the campus obstacle course on West Campus early in the afternoon. The event was attended by well over 200 cadets, midshipman, and staff. There were six physical challenges that each unit competed in hoping to claim the Commanders’ Cup. These included push-ups, planks, an obstacle course relay, a “dizzy-izzy” relay, 30-pound ammo can lifts, and a gear run.

Push-ups were a hard-fought battle with Army taking first, Navy in second, and Air Force in third. The Army also was victorious in the plank competition, but this time Air Force placed second. In the obstacle course relay, the Navy won first with several impressive times; the Army took second. The dizzy-bat relay was an exciting event. One team member would spin around a rolled sleeping mat with their head on the mat, run several hundred feet to a second mat and spin again. Then, he would run back to the next member of the team. In a five-member relay fashion, the Army took first here, followed by the Navy. In the ammo can lift, the Navy team finished far ahead of everyone else, thanks to an outstanding performance by our senior enlisted student, GySgt Gant. Army earned second.

The final event was the gear run. This consisted of running a litter, one 25-pound weight lifting plate, and two ammo cans to a turnaround point then coming back as fast as possible. The Navy took this event with a commanding lead, followed behind by the Army, then lastly the Air Force. The overall winner of the Commanders’ Cup was the Army ROTC with a total score of 15. They were followed closely by the Navy with a score of 14. Leaving the Air Force in third with seven points.

In conjunction with the events of the Commanders’ Cup, the Naval ROTC unit hosted a barbeque. Cadets, midshipman, and staff had an opportunity to interact and learn from one-another, as well as to develop a closer bond in service to the US military team. This event was a huge success, and we hope to have Navy come out on top next Commanders’ Cup!
We love to hear from our Alumni!

Please contact us at nrotc@ku.edu for comments, questions or suggestions.

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Please consider giving to the Dwight G. Rickman Naval Award fund and the newly established Nicholas A. Herren Memorial Leadership Award. Your tax-deductible contribution to the endowment fund shall be used to provide awards to deserving students in the Naval ROTC program.

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Thank you for your continued support!