

A Veteran That Inspires Me

By Andelyn Caraway

Veterans are special. They are special because they fought for our lives to save our freedom. Veterans day is a very important and special day, as we pay our respect for those who served in all branches. An American that served and is now a veteran that inspires me is my "adopted" grandpa, Lieutenant Commander Brett Ulander. He inspires me because of how much of a hard worker he is, the experiences he shares, and his determination to accept and accomplish challenges.

A little bit about Commander Ulander's career and life. After he finished his degree in physiology, he took a few flight lessons in a Cessna 172 just for fun because he didn't know what he wanted to do. He knew he wanted a job that was meaningful and financially rewarding. His brother, who he looked up to, served as a Navy pilot and encouraged him to take the test to be a Navy pilot. Although he was nervous, he took the test. Three months later, a recruiter called him to let him know he was accepted in the Navy. Before he was "officially in the Navy" he had to complete Aviation Officer Candidate School (AOCS). AOCS was four months long and everyday was spent with an intense drill instructor with the goal of teaching him attention to detail. Every detail mattered, like shiny shoes or a loose thread. He learned to pay attention to the little things which prepared him to pay attention while flying airplanes. .

Soon all he wanted to do was fly, he spent a lot of time studying to learn as much as he could. He applied himself and got good grades. After talking to many senior pilots, he decided he wanted to fly P-3 Orions. The P-3 mission was to track enemy submarines, collect "intelligence" with special sensors and shoot both long and short range missiles at enemy ships. He spent seventeen years flying P-3s. During that time he was Pilot in command, the Mission Commander, senior instructor pilot and senior evaluator pilot. He was selected to be a pilot for a four star Admiral, which is the highest rank in the Navy. For three years he flew the Admiral and his team all over the world. The longer he spent in the Navy the more important serving his country became to him. It was important to him to be a part of a team that kept the world safe so everyone can live free in the United States and enjoy all the rights of the US Constitution. He learned a lot in his twenty years in the navy and when he retired he was asked to go to a Marine Corps base and help teach pilots how to fly MV-22 osprey.

Commander Ulander has impacted my life in many ways. I met Commander Ulander at the age of seven. He attended the same church as my family and lived in my neighborhood. Our families quickly became more like family than friends. He took on another challenge by stepping in to adopt me as his granddaughter. He filled a gap, that I didn't have growing up. He helps me appreciate what I have in life and the freedom I have. He encourages and inspires me to work hard, do my best, to respect, and strive to achieve great things that will serve God, my community and my country. He truly wanted to be a part of saving America and keeping our

freedom. He also proved he truly wanted to be a part of my life since he did not have to accept me, support me, or love me like he does. He of course wants me to learn the importance of getting good grades in school and to always be kind and respectful. He is a true hero not only for our country but for me as a now twelve-year-old girl, who needs to learn the full meaning of duty, honor, and country along with the sacrifice he and other veterans have endured to fight for our freedom. Freedom is not free and my grandpa, Commander Ulander is an example of a servant leader that has instilled that in me.