

Ruben M. Banks, MS – 2019

“who will you be?....”

When I boarded the plane on the foggy cold Saturday morning leaving the great hospitable state of Mississippi, I was in a mindset of questioning what my next week would be like. I was bewildered with the idea of meeting so many noble individuals in one week; it felt as if I was going from nothing to something overnight. Not literally nothing, but I was embracing the notion that I would have never met any of these individuals in my teenage life. A week had past and again I was leaving wee hours of a Saturday morning. Again, I was filled with a confused nature, so much had happened in one week.

I was bewildered at this particular point because of the idea of how now I was someone but who would I be. After presenting my farewell delegation speech I had been empowered with the inspirational phrase of “who will you be?....” I felt the phrase repeating over and over again - in my mind increasing consciousness of the question. It had been brought to my attention that I had been in the room with individuals that many dare to dream of seeing and yet alone share one word with, yet we have had conversations and handshakes. Just this experience sparked a flame in me to challenge myself and others around me.

Hearing the vice commander of the Joint Chief of Staff is one of the greatest experiences in my entire life. There is only a once-in-a-lifetime chance to meet someone like this, but the time will be remembered for life. Having an opportunity to view someone who has walked the path in which I soon plan to embark is in my opinion every child and adult’s dream. As a future member of the Air Force and eventually the United States Air Force hearing his story fueled inspiration for my own career, and also taught me things I didn’t know about my own profession. Not only did it provide knowledge, but also prospective from others, which increased my open minded nature about the military - how we view it and the world around us views it also. My whole life has not only been influenced, but also transformed by this ONE week experience.

All of the various exceptional speakers contributed to the knowledge that I now have and plan to utilize for the rest of my life. From the chief justice of the United States to the visiting the home of George Washington, each moment allowed me to walk through history and understand more about my present.