

B. How have hardships or challenges you have faced in your life influenced your decision to apply to a military Academy? What have you learned from these experiences?

For the past 15 years, I have started my day looking at the words “Beat Navy”. A black and gold sweat towel hangs on my bedroom wall with these words. My Father gave this towel to me when I was a little boy. “Beat Navy” is a phrase I heard over and over again from my family – my Dad, my uncle and my brother – all West Point grads. It was spoken with such meaning and passion. It was almost as if they were in love with the phrase. Why is “Beat Navy” such a significant phrase? I believe I have learned the answer, which is portrayed in the following story.

“Mrs. B., J. is a very nice boy, however, he has many problems. He doesn’t focus during class time, he struggles with his peers, and he is loud and distracting. We just don’t ever see J. amounting to much in life or going very far.” My first grade teacher to my mother said this during a parent-teacher conference. This was how my teachers and classmates saw me from kindergarten through the second grade. I was labeled a problem child with learning disabilities and was written-off by most everyone except my family.

I did have a variety of issues such as dyslexia, hypersensitive hearing and memory problems. Though everyone wanted to know “why”, the real matter was “now what?” Odds seemed to be against me. However, my loving parents took me out of grade school after the 2nd grade to be home-schooled because they knew we could beat these problems. My wonderful mother knew of my potential and was determined to fix her son and prove all of the non-believers wrong. Though it took years, guidance from expensive experts, and lots of patience and love, we succeeded.

I returned to a regular school environment for the 6th grade. As a high school student, I used this experience of being labeled a failure to fuel my attitude and desire to be best - in academics, athletics and school leadership. Now, I’m a straight A student, member of the National Honor Society, captain of high school sport teams and student government officer. I beat the odds, I “Beat Navy”.

Today, I understand that these words have such powerful meaning. These words are part of and reflect upon the passion, spirit, and service of the cadets preparing to serve their country at West Point. I credit my difficult school years for making me a perseverant and dedicated young man, ready to do my best all the time. I am ready to join the elite group of men and women who attend the United States Military Academy. I know West Point will be the perfect place for me to demonstrate my development and potential as a leader and servant soldier.