

Fleming accepted to U.S. Military Academy

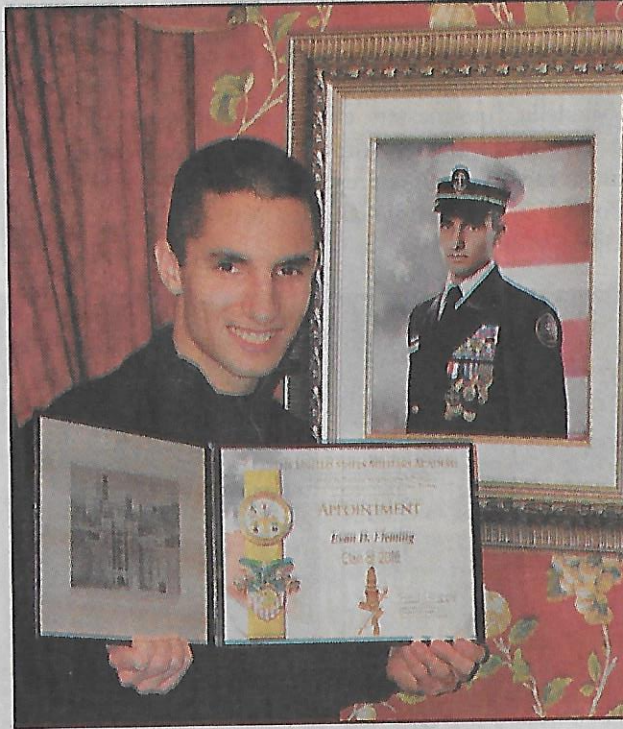
By Teri Davis
Contributing Writer

CLAYTON - When you ask a child what he wants to be when he grows up, his answer will typically change from one time to the next, but not in the case of Northmont Senior Evan Fleming. Since first grade, Fleming has been telling the same tale, "I'm going to go to West Point and be an Army officer."

In November, he came one step closer to fulfilling that dream when he received his Letter of Assurance from the military academy.

Fleming's interest in West Point began in childhood because he and his father, Doug, would watch old black and white World War II movies. He started reading up on some of the military heroes he was seeing in those movies and noticed that many were West Point graduates.

As an eighth grader, Fleming attended an assembly presented by the Northmont Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) in



Independent photo by Teri Davis

Northmont senior Evan Fleming proudly displays his appointment to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point.

which one of the cadets told the audience, "I eat discipline for breakfast."

Fleming says that the

notion clicked with him, and he signed up for the class as a freshman. Over the course of four years, he rose through the

ranks to his senior year where he was promoted to Commanding Officer of the unit.

NJROTC instructor Lt. Colonel Kenneth Knotts commended Fleming, noting that his academics, his commitment and his leadership have been "the building blocks to be an outstanding officer." Knotts says he expects nothing but success for Fleming.

The application process began in June of 2011 when Fleming attended a camp at West Point. While there, he participated in classes and physical training, and he became familiar with what a typical daily schedule would be like.

After returning from the camp, the grueling paperwork began. Fleming had to submit several essays, fill out forms and procure numerous letters of recommendation, including one from Representative Mike Turner.

Fleming's mother, Gwen, said, the NJROTC instructors and the Northmont guidance office were key to Fleming's

success in getting all of the paperwork accomplished. She said the process truly "took a village."

Between now and when he reports for duty on July 2, Fleming has to keep up his grades, fill out even more forms, get measured for uniforms, keep up his physical fitness and get a preliminary security clearance and a police background check performed.

Once he arrives for summer training, also known as "Beast Barracks," he will be swept into a whirlwind of activity including physical training, class work, leadership training and a mandatory sport participation. Fleming thinks he will try out Sprint Football, a program intended for cadets weighing less than 172 pounds.

His father says that the academy's program is intended to give them more than they can handle in order to force them to make decisions and prioritize.

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Fleming admits he is a little nervous. He hopes that he doesn't stutter on the first day and be forever known as "the kid who stutters." He has received advice from friends and relatives who've been through similar experiences but knows that everyone's experience is a little different. He plans to just take it week by week.

His parents are a little nervous as well, noting that they are proud and excited, but, as Gwen says, placing her hand over her heart and choking up somewhat, "a bit emotional." Parents get to visit for a couple days after six weeks. Fleming will get his first break at Thanksgiving.

Once he graduates, Fleming has a five-year commitment to active duty and a three-year commitment as a reservist; however, he says he intends to make a career of the Army and hopes to be commissioned in infantry, armor or artillery.

Fleming's motivations may have been best summed up back in elementary school when one of his teachers

asked him why he wanted to be an Army officer, and he replied, "Somebody's got to do it."

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