



FLYING HIGH

— By Sandra Walters

“My journey in the Civil Air Patrol began when I attended an orientation and the commander mentioned I could control the plane for 30 minutes during the next meeting. Ecstatic, that’s all I heard,” Jacob Brown said.

“The following week, I started the process with my older brother, Cleveland Jr., uncertain how this experience would positively affect our lives. I controlled the plane, and it was truly indescribable.”

The nonprofit Civil Air Patrol Cadet Program’s purpose is to develop young people into dynamic Americans and aerospace leaders. Cadets attend a weekly after-school program that offers the benefits of character education, fitness, leadership and aerospace curriculum for middle and high school students. Cadets are not obligated to join the military, and Civil Air Patrol does not recruit cadets for the armed forces. However, the uniform, drills, military customs and courtesies and military traditions are all significant aspects of cadet life that contribute to individual self-discipline.

“This program has shaped me into the person I am today. My brother and I were thrilled when as cadet colonels, the Civil Air Patrol awarded us with the highest cadet honor,” Jacob continued.

It takes an average of five years to complete the 16 requirements for the General Carl A. Spaatz Award, which include establishing self-discipline, personal responsibility, leadership, persuasion skills and laying the groundwork for a future career in aviation, space or technology. The brothers, on the other hand, finished in under four years. They became the first African-American siblings in Texas to achieve the award.

Jacob stated, “We had to take a rigorous four-part exam — testing physical fitness, moral reasoning, leadership and aerospace education. We studied three to four hours a day, which didn’t include our schoolwork. It was exhausting, but it all paid off on May 23, 2021, when we stood on that stage

and received the award from the Civil Air Patrol at Redbird Composite Squadron.”

“Shortly after achieving the Spaatz Award, my brother was accepted into the Coast Guard Academy, and this allowed me to see the results of our hard work again. It motivates me to continue. Now I know what my parents meant when they said, ‘You’ll thank us later.’”

“I couldn’t see the end at first,” Cleveland Jr. concurred with Jacob, “but my parents have always had my back. My father mentioned going to the academy frequently, but I didn’t truly understand until I got accepted into Air Force Academy Prep, Merchant Marine Academy and the Coast Guard Academy, which has a 20 percent acceptance rate. I prepared for the challenge by participating in the Civil Air Patrol. I joined the Coast Guard because it was a better fit for me. I liked that it was smaller than the others in comparison to their enormous size, and the Coast Guard Academy offered a bachelor’s degree paid in full, room and board, monthly stipend of \$1,200, summer trips around the world, officer rank, 100 percent employment upon graduation that pays between \$60,000-\$70,000 a year and veteran benefits. This is of \$280,000 value for simply putting in the work as a Civil Air Patrol participant and becoming a cadet colonel. I couldn’t turn down this generous offer.

“I recommend the Civil Air Patrol to anyone who wants to experience the thrill of flying, desire recognition, qualify for college scholarships, solidify moral character, make friends and have fun,” Cleveland Jr. encouraged.

“When we started, we had no idea what opportunities would be presented to us simply for putting in the effort,” Cleveland Jr. continued. “I learned to persevere in whatever the challenge. It will eventually pay off.”

Cleveland Jr. graduated from Lakeridge High School in June and is currently a freshman enrolled in the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut. Jacob is a junior at Lakeridge High School and intends to follow in his elder brother’s footsteps. **NOW**

Editor’s Note: For more information about Redbird Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, visit www.redbird.cap.gov.

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