

THE GREATEST EXPERIENCE

As I boarded the final plane from Dallas to El Paso on that Saturday morning, I couldn't help but reminisce about the week that was almost like a dream to me. It was strange to think that it was only a week earlier that I was arriving in the exact same airport catching a flight to D.C. I was ready for this trip then. I had never been to the capital before and I was really looking forward to meeting all of the political celebrities, and seeing all of the historical places that I had only seen in history books. However my adventure didn't start in D.C. as I expected, but rather it started as met three others wearing the same white name tags in the airport. We talked as we boarded the plane and instantly I had three new best friends.

When we arrived in D.C. and met more people from the west at the airport, I remember thinking to myself, "Wow all these people are great and really friendly". Little did I know that this small group of airport friends was only a tiny part of what was to come. From then on, everything became for lack of a better word, overwhelming. The food, the service, the speakers, the sheer amount of people, it all was too good to be true. But the best and most valuable part of the whole trip came when I realized that to me, it was no longer about all the things I had initially came on this trip for. To me this trip wasn't about the fancy food, the famous speakers, the five-diamond hotel, it was about all of the wonderful people I met during these other things. I was no longer as excited to meet the speaker we had the day, as I was to learn more about the Kansas delegate I had yet to meet. To be accepted immediately by 103 other people who were like you is an amazing experience and was the thing I will never forget. It is amazing to think that only a week of my life would affect the rest of my life.

They told us that the whole trip cost two million dollars, but in reality money couldn't touch the experience itself. That's why if I had to pick my favorite speakers and moments of the trip, it would have to be not the president, or a senator, but listening to my peers speak about everything from politics to personal interests. So in the end, thanks to everybody. Thanks to the military mentors for showing me that just because you are in the military it doesn't mean that you can't be a person. Thanks to the Hearst foundation for finding me 103 new best friends. And most of all thanks to all of the other delegates, for accepting me, for teaching me, and for showing me that this country really does have some genuine people to help lead it in the next generation.