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From Miramonte to the Military

By Sophie Braccini

Recent Miramonte graduates Chris Capdevielle and Nick Read just before boot camp. Photo Sophie Braccini

When Nick Read entered Si Si Cafe in Moraga, wearing his United States Marine Corps (USMC) sweater, one of the customers, a former drill sergeant, immediately addressed him to give him tips and wish him well. Behind the counter, one of the employees, a former schoolmate, hugged the recent Miramonte graduate and wished him good luck.

This is the kind of reaction that Read, and two other Mirmamonte graduates, Chris Capdevielle and Luke Carrillo, get everywhere - great support and encouragement as they get ready to join the Marines. While it's a life choice that's not for everybody, it makes a lot of sense for the three friends and their families.

Read, Capdevielle and Carrillo went to high school together, Capdevielle and Carrillo knew each other since the second grade. They are healthy, athletic and very bright students who are making a choice that's a family tradition. "I come from a long military line. Both my grandfathers were in the military," says Capdevielle with pride. "In fact, one of my grandfathers told me that our family history of defending this country goes back to the Revolution."

Carrillo's father was also in the military and Read has an uncle and a cousin following the same path. The three young men are joining the Marines and have enlisted to enter the rank of Private.

Their motivation and objectives are slightly different, but they all express a deep love for their country and their sense of duty to defend it. "I want to serve my country and protect freedom," says Read. "We cannot take what we have for granted; it takes a strong military to protect our way of life."

"I always knew I wanted to join the military," says Capdevielle. "I love the United States and I wanted to repay my debt to this country for giving me all the opportunities that I have."

They also have plans for the future. "My job will be aviation mechanic," says Read. "I want to be productive right away, learn a skill and self discipline." Read sees the first four years as a stepping stone; he thinks he will go back to college, paid by the military, then if he can, become an officer. Read says he will probably make the military a career, and fulfill his dream of becoming an aircraft pilot.

Capdevielle knows that the military will be his career. "I'll try to stay as long as I can," he says. He plans to become an officer as well. "In the Marines you need to come from the enlisted rank before becoming an officer," he adds.

None of the three young men are afraid of the dangers inherent in joining the military while the war in Afghanistan continues. "The Marines is a brotherhood, what some of my brothers went through has been terrible, what might happen to me cannot be worse," says Capdevielle.

"I'm joining at a time of somewhat peace, and I know that things can change pretty fast, but that does not scare me," adds Read. He also says that while his parents are very concerned about the risks, they are supportive of his choice.

The young men are a bit concerned about boot camp, the 10 weeks of intense training, that, according to Read, no one is allowed to quit. "We have spent a lot of time training at the Marine's facility in Pleasant Hill," says Capdevielle who feels that he is ready.

Miramonte High School College and Career Center Advisor Eloise Schneider indicated that it is a bit unusual for the high school to have three young men enlisting in the same year. "We are a college-bound school, but every year we have a few students enlisting and one or two going to a military academy," she said. At Campolindo, Gwenly Carrel said that, to her knowledge, in the 2012 graduating class only one student went to a naval academy prep school. (Acalanes High School did not return phone calls in time for this article.)

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