## **THE OBERLIN HERALD**

Section B

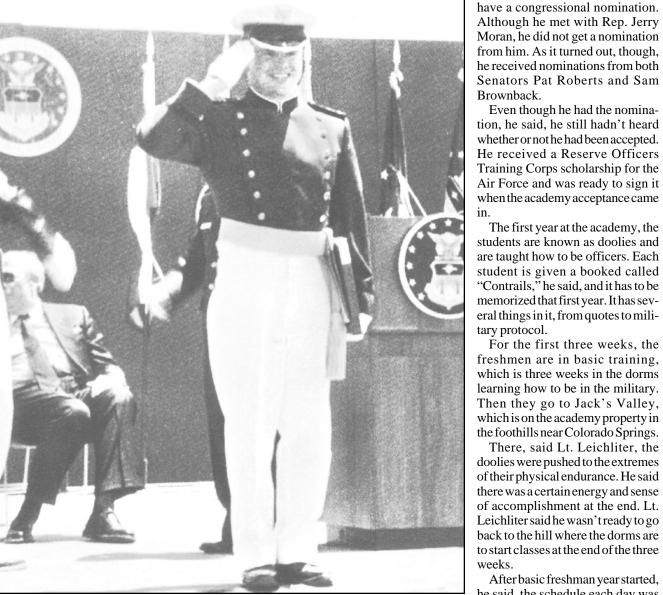
The feature page about interesting people, places and things to do

Wednesday, July 23, 2003



AT THE SCOTTISH FESTIVAL in Estes Park, Clayton's Jacob Leichliter participated in the color guard.





## Man turns dream into reality as he graduates with ring

**By KIMBERLY BRANDT** 

self and four grueling years of study and training, Jacob Leichliter of Clayton has the bars of a second lieutenant and a class ring to show that he graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy. Lt. Leichliter met with

the Oberlin Rotary Club

last Tuesday to show the

He said it was a great feeling to

know that he had a town behind him.

When things got tough at the acad-

emy, he remembered he was there

learning to keep people at home

Tuesday at The Gateway with a video called the "Pursuit of Excel-

lence," which showed the academy

grounds, from dorms to the famous

a great place. It put him through some of the hardest times he has had

in his life to date, though he joked

that he is not yet married and hasn't raised any kids. The academy, he

said, taught him things he never

He said he started the process that

led him to the academy during his

junior year at Decatur Community

High School. He said he had to take

an admissions test and also had to

thought he would learn.

last four years.

safe.

chapel.

gether, then it was time to head off After two years of preparing him- to class, then formation, lunch and

more classes until 3:30 p.m. Every day after class, said Lt. Leichliter, they had physical training. As he talked, he showed

slides of his fellow cadets in the dorm, in Jack's Valley and at different functions.

Lt. Leichliter Lt. Leichliter said he spent four years with his

group what he has been up to for the class, and they are like brothers and sisters now. After the first year, he said, train-

ing takes a spin, because by the senior year he was one of the cadets running the squadron.

The first semester of his senior year, Lt. Leichliter was a member of He opened the luncheon program the squadron staff as the human relations officer. He said he was responsible for the social environment and was trained how to help out with any crisis.

His second semester, he was a Lt. Leichliter said the academy is flight commander directly responsible for over 30 cadets, helping them to develop into better officers.

The academic standards at the academy are amazing, he said. The biggest difference between the academy and a regular university is that the teachers are there to help the students, not for themselves.

During the last two years, he said, he started to play rugby and thinks he has found his passion.

There were also religious benefits, he said. Especially during basic training, people from Colorado Springs came in to make sure that every religion was taken care of.

"If it wasn't for God," said Lt. Leichliter, "there is no way I would have made it through the academy, or to it."

Now that graduation is over, he whether or not he had been accepted. was back in Kansas to help out with He received a Reserve Officers harvest and see his father, Dennis Training Corps scholarship for the Leichliter of Clayton. Before com-

**2NDLT.JACOBLEICHLITER** 

2ND LT. JACOB LEICHLITER saluted his classmates and fellow officers after he received his diploma.

Air Force and was ready to sign it inghome, he went to Alaska for two when the academy acceptance came in.

Even though he had the nomina-

students are known as doolies and are taught how to be officers. Each student is given a booked called "Contrails," he said, and it has to be memorized that first year. It has several things in it, from quotes to military protocol.

For the first three weeks, the freshmen are in basic training, which is three weeks in the dorms learning how to be in the military. Then they go to Jack's Valley, which is on the academy property in the foothills near Colorado Springs.

There, said Lt. Leichliter, the doolies were pushed to the extremes of their physical endurance. He said there was a certain energy and sense of accomplishment at the end. Lt. Leichliter said he wasn't ready to go back to the hill where the dorms are to start classes at the end of the three weeks.

After basic freshman year started, he said, the schedule each day was education he received in Oberlin for breakfast to start at 6:50 a.m. All schools helped prepare him for the 4,000 students ate in 20 minutes to- classes he took at the academy.

weeks to visit with his mother, Beth Jones, and see as much of the state The first year at the academy, the as possible. He said he sister Stacey is in college in Rolla, Mo.

> On Friday, he will leave for Vandenburg Air Force Base in California, where he will attend a seven week school on space and missiles. Part way through, he will make a career decision. Lt. Leichliter said most likely he will go into missiles.

> He said he wanted to fly, but Air Force said no.

> The lieutenant said he owes five years to the Air Force to pay for the education he received at the academy. He hasn't decided if he will just stay for those five years or for another 20 and make the Air Force a career.

> With a degree in history, he said, if he doesn't stay in the Air Force until retirement, he has thought of teaching.

> Lt. Leichliter said he owes the community a big thanks for the support he has received. He said the



AFTER GRADUATION at the Air Force Academy on May 28 in Colorado Springs, 977 graduates threw their caps in the air as the Thunderbirds Precision Flying Team flew overhead.