Good Evening ladies and gentlemen, I am Cadet Margaret Northrup and this is Cadet John Pedro. We represent Cornell’s chapter of Scabbard and Blade, a tri-service military honor society founded in 1921. The society is dedicated to providing professional development opportunities for cadets and midshipmen and for preserving the long military tradition of Cornell University.

Cornell’s history has been uniquely tied with that of the military since the university’s founding in 1865. The Morrill Land Grant Act requires universities to provide instruction in military science, yet Cornell's first president, Andrew Dickson White -- a Civil War veteran -- took it a step further and made military training mandatory for all male students.

Since 1866, military instruction has been one of the many facets of campus life and Cornell graduates have served with distinction in every major conflict since the Spanish-American War. Their stories continually inspire all of us here tonight. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, over 9000 Cornellians – students, alumni, and professors – answered our nation’s call. This number included some 5000 commissioned officers – more than West Point and Annapolis combined. Cornell would go on to replicate this feat two decades later in World War II, when over 20,000 Cornellians served in uniform during the war.

Barton Hall, which now houses the ROTC programs, became the Army School of Military Aeronautics, where some of the United States’ first military pilots received their training. During the war, a unit of Cornell volunteers organized by alum Edward Isley Tinkham became the first U.S. unit to come under fire. Cornell honored 264 dead in WWI, and we remember those brave men today in the colonnade connecting Lyon and McFadden Hall, where you can find each of their names.

The architecture and symbolism of the War Memorial speak as a living tribute to

the thousands of Cornellians who fought in the First World War. Some 76 shields around the exterior of the building contain the insignia of different army divisions and corps from the era, as well as the crests of the state of New York, United States, and Cornell University. Above each of the 16 windows of the cloister are the names of battles in which Cornell units fought. In a radio address for the dedication of the War Memorial on May 23, 1931, President Hoover said the memorial, “commemorates the contribution of youth to the cause of America, a free gift of devoted young lives to an ideal they deemed worth cherishing and defending.”

Cornell has produced 3 Medal of Honor Recipients, countless highly decorated combat veterans, and a bevy of flag and general officers, both past and present. As we look around tonight, certainly there are a few in its future as well. Cornell’s campus also contains 13 different War Memorials, in addition to the plaques in Barton and the WWI Memorial, monuments are located around campus from Anabel Taylor Hall to Sackett Bridge at the eastern end of Beebe lake.

Barton Hall, where many of us spend more time than we spend at home, is the namesake of Frank A. Barton, who became the first Cornellian to receive a commission in 1891. His thirty-year career included tours of duty in the Spanish-American War, the Philippines and Mexico. Additionally, he was recommended for the Medal of Honor. In 1904 Barton returned to Cornell as the Commandant of Cadets, only to find a weak corps with low morale and poor discipline. He quickly turned the program around and soon the Cornell Corps earned exceptional ratings from Army inspectors. Colonel Barton returned from retirement in 1917 to lead a new unit at Cornell established by the Defense Act of 1916, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps. In honor of his contributions to the university and our country, the New York State Armory and Drill Hall was officially renamed Barton Hall in 1940.

On 14 August 1945, the Naval ROTC unit was established under the command of Captain B.W. Chippendale. In 1947, Army ROTC founded the Air Sciences and Tactics division, a forerunner to Air Force ROTC. The Air Force ROTC Detachment was formally established in 1950 under the command of Colonel George T. Crowell.

Cornell graduates have served honorably in the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War and are serving on the front lines of the Global War on Terrorism. In June 1993 the University dedicated a Korean and Vietnam War Memorial in the Anabel Taylor Hall rotunda, honoring the 47 Cornellians who gave their lives in those and other hostilities since World War II. As a living memorial, Cornell endows a scholarship for the children of veterans, the first such endowment of an educational institution in the country.

Many ROTC graduates who were and are successful in civilian careers such as finance, business, engineering and education consider ROTC the best part of their Cornell education. Today’s cadre at Cornell carry on the tradition of teaching leadership and excellence that was established by their predecessors. This environment provides Cornell cadets with a strong instructional program and an excellent foundation to serve the nation in their future military and civilian careers, continuing Cornell's long-established tradition of excellence.

Today’s cadets and midshipmen carry on the proud tradition of leadership, excellence and service established by our predecessors, and ROTC is an indispensable part of fulfilling founder Ezra Cornell's dream of "an institution where any person can find instruction in any study.”