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Lampasas native Cole Kelley is the cousin of Dispatch Record news correspondent Mason Hines and someone Hines said he has always looked up to.

Lampasas native returns home after his military service

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the final story in a series the Dispatch Record has published this month to highlight military veterans in Lampasas County.

BY MASON HINES
DISPATCH RECORD

Bravery. Honor. Sacrifice. These words can define the life and career of countless veterans throughout the United States.

For Lampasas native Cole Kelley, his military service was built on more than a desire to protect his country and provide a future for his family.

Each year, 18-year-olds across the country are faced with the question, "What do you want to do with your life?" Many choose to go to college, trade school or enter the workforce. For Kelley, the answer was less clear when he was that age.

"I personally wasn't ready to decide what I wanted professionally, so college seemed like a waste of time and money," Kelley said. "The Army provided me time to

grow, mature and decide what I might want to do."

In addition to giving him an avenue for growth and career success, Kelley also cited his military service as affecting him in ways most can only imagine.

"I learned a lot about myself, physically and mentally, while in [the Army]," he said. "I met my wife [in Germany], started a family and developed strong skills that continue to help me in life. Not just working, but in my personal life as well."

When asked why he chose to come back to the Lampasas area after his time in the Army, Kelley mentioned his roots.

"I moved back here after my service. I spent 10 years away but knew getting home would be good," the veteran said.

When asked "would you serve again, if you could, and what advice do you have for someone wanting to enter the service?" Kelley took a little time before answering.

"Personally, I'd go back in a heartbeat," he said. "I was medically retired after my back surgery, so I didn't get a choice. If given one, I'd still be serving."

"I strongly advise going into the service," Kelley said. "Maybe people should try a shorter first term, just see if it fits. Not everyone can be a soldier but should definitely try."

As the country remembers the sacrifices made by the servicemen and women whom we honor on Veterans Day, Americans can remind one another that we share a debt of gratitude to those who have served.



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Cole Kelley is shown in this military service photo.