

Spencer Reese's girlfriend thought Spencer had gone crazy when she found out what he wanted to do on spring break.

Sure, they were both going to Florida together, but Spencer had something else in mind.

Reese spent his time in Florida writing an essay. The topic: past American presidents, their control (as civilians) over the military and what happens when they don't agree with their generals.

"My girlfriend was more interested in the beach and jet skiing than Gen. McClellan and Pres. Truman. I really didn't understand that." Reese said with a laugh. "But she put up with it."

It's a good thing she did.

Reese won the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts's first annual essay competition last week. The award carries a \$2,500 prize.

"It's not just about the money though. I've always had an interest in military history," Reese said.

The competition pitted all of the cadets and midshipmen from the Boston area colleges against each other. Reese is a Boston University student and a cadet with BU's Air Force ROTC program.

His work also earned his detachment \$1,500. The essay topped all four other entries.

Peter Capernaros is on the historical society's board and helped put together the competition. "Spencer did an excellent job and he well deserved the award," Capernaros said.

"One of the things that struck me was that he did more than we asked him to do, he went back to the origins of our country," Capernaros added. "Everything he wrote was consistent with his thesis statement and he had excellent sources."

The contest's instructions only said that the entries had to talk about the time period from the Civil War to the Korean War. Reese's essay mentioned all of U.S. history including the American Revolution to Pres. Bush's recent decisions on Iran.

"One of the things we (the society) are most concerned with is that the next generation of military leaders have a strong idea of the history and the past. It helps give you an understanding of the limitations to our power," Capernaros said.

He said the society wanted the competition to be local at first. "Today was an encouragement in our ambition to continue to have this competition." Capernaros added that the society hopes to expand the competition to all of the ROTC schools as far west as Worcester next year.

The society is the oldest incorporated society of its kind in the country having been founded in 1876.

They meet monthly over lunch and bring in guest speakers to talk about different military issues. Capernaros said the society is made up primarily of former military officers and civilian experts in military history.

A brigadier general, a handful of colonels and the officers at his detachment looked on as Reese received his award.

"It's a great feeling to be recognized by all that brass," Reese said. "It's definitely a sense of accomplishment to be recognized by your cadre just being a sophomore in college."

Reese said he spent a week researching the topic before he left for spring break. “It’s a real feeling of accomplishment to produce a 15 page paper and end up beating out cadets from Brandeis, Harvard and MIT. Never let it be said that BU can’t compete with the ivy’s,” Reese added.

“It’s probably the single best investment I’ve ever made. \$2,500 for 50 hours of work is probably more than I’ll make for a long time.”



Caption: C/3C Spencer Reese accepts his award from Brig. Gen. John Carlson, (Ret.) president of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts.