

Letters to the Editor

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Home—where you hang your Kevlar

I'm a new reader of *The NCO Journal* and I like to hear what the NCOs of the Army discuss among their peers. I hope to become a part of the "backbone" someday and your magazine shows me the problems that NCOs face every day and the discussions give good solutions to these problems and how to solve them.

I'm also writing to say that I agree with SPC Renee Houston (Spring 95 *Journal*) of the 3/81 Armor Reg, Ft. Knox, KY. SPC Houston discussed the standards of barracks living as unfair and inconsistent. I've been under both the Single Soldier Initiative Program and now, the Single Soldier Quality of Life Program. These two programs have great ideas and good foundations, but it seems as though nobody wants to take charge of the driving force behind them.

On the other hand, I couldn't disagree more with SSG Thomas Muldoon, U.S. Army Reserve, Bolivar, OH. He states, "...Besides, the barracks aren't meant to be one's permanent home." I don't remember my recruiter telling me anything about enlisting into marriage. I was under the impression I could enlist and not worry about having a roof over my head because I was single. To me, home is where you hang your Kevlar.

PFC Joseph P. Campbell
529th Ord Co, Vilseck, Germany

Sergeant's Time

One of the best thought-out training events for NCOs and soldiers in recent years, "Sergeant's Time" is usually conducted one day a week for a four- to eight-hour period.

This training event in my opinion is the only real time the front-line supervisors can improve their squads' development. These front-line leaders often feel as if they have to conduct training that will please their chain of command. This time should be used for NCOs to measure their soldiers' skills, knowledge or combat readiness.

I hope that our senior leaders can create and maintain an environment that protects and promotes growth for our front-line leaders. We should encourage creativity and promote flexibility in our section leaders. Our Army needs soldiers who are well-disciplined and capable of thinking for themselves.

SSG Reginald La Grone
Ft. Sill, OK

ROTC unit develops class based on magazine articles

We would first like to start off by thanking *The NCO Journal* and *Infantry Magazine* for giving us the resources to open an exchange of ideas and information to support training, education and the development of future U.S. Army officers at Bowling Green State University, "The Black Swamp Battalion," Army

ROTC. Articles on the Battle of Mogadishu allowed us to develop a class on the battle and present it to the cadre and cadets in our weekly Officer and NCO Professional Development program.

This class enabled us to show the cadets what we believe is the future battlefield and also how NCOs and officers work together to make the Army's "team concept" come to life.

We're glad to say the class was a success.

2LT Nelson G. Kraft and SSG Joseph Mamiolo
U.S. Army ROTC Bn, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH

Reevaluate promotion system

I'm writing in reference to "Disgruntled with promotion system" by CPL Ronnie Thompson (Winter 94-95).

I agree with his letter and want to add that PT and weapons qualification should be re-examined in regards to promotion. As it now stands, if a soldier scores 300 on his APFT and expert in weapons qualification, he is allowed 50 promotion points. If they're going to keep PT and weapons as part of the promotion points system, then it should be fair across the board. Does a soldier who scores 300 or qualify expert in weapons make him a better leader than a soldier who scores 260 on PT and qualifies as sharpshooter? How do you justify soldiers in remote sites who can't qualify? How about soldiers who are on profile and taking the alternate PT test?

The Army standard for PT is 180 and marksman for weapon qualification. If they score 300 and qualify expert then they have exceeded the standard. I echo CPL Thompson's question—"When will the Army reevaluate the promotion system?"

SGT Steve Yearwood
HQ USAG, Vint Hill Farms Station, VA

No fan of promotion point system

There are discrepancies in the rebuttal (Spring 95) to CPL Thompson from SSG Donald Kilgore. First of all, time in

grade and time in service are no longer valid for points under the existing promotion point worksheet. In fact, they haven't been for some time. As far as MOS knowledge—well, we all know what happened to the SQT/SDT programs. For some of us there hasn't been a valid SQT/SDT for many years.

Recommendations from the chain of command? I don't know how it is in other units, but in the units I've been assigned to, the commander rarely interviews the soldier, looks at his/her record or talks to his/her supervisor before awarding points to the soldier.

I agree with SSG Kilgore's statement that "an NCO...who takes the time to pursue his/her civilian education does make a more effective leader." And I, too, was dismayed with the comments in *Army Times* pertaining to the need for less emphasis on college credit for promotion points.

However, I'm not a fan of the promotion point system. Archaic and many times unfair, it rewards those soldier in those MOSes who happen to be in the right place at the right time (call it the "MOS du jour"), while, at the same time punishing those soldiers (pay purposes, leadership positions, etc.) who, by no fault of their own, get bogged down in overstrength MOSes.

A soldier shouldn't have to change his MOS to accommodate promotion. Too many soldiers are promoted to grades they are neither prepared for, nor in some cases, worthy of, simply because they have the requisite amount of points that month.

The system needs a large overhaul. We're losing too many quality soldiers simply because they can't acquire the points they need to get to the next level.

SGT Bruce G. Stratton

C Co, 306th MI Bn, Ft. Huachuca, AZ

Policy governing barracks life outdated

The article by CSM Dare in your Winter 94-95 issue was right on target. I retired from active duty in 1967. At that time, the number of married personnel in the Army had reached a high level,

with most living in housing apart from single troops. It had become very clear some years before my retirement that the policies governing life in the barracks had become greatly outdated, for all the reasons cited by CSM Dare.

If command sergeants major as a group promoted CSM Dare's ideas with their commanders, a better break could develop for single soldiers living in barracks.

*1SG (Ret) James W. Clinton
Old Bethpage, NY*

What's meant by "...pampering single soldiers?"

I'd like to know what SSG Muldoon (Spring 95) feels is pampering the single soldier. Does he think walking past the orderly room on the way to your room (after duty hours) is justification for a "hey you" detail?

I've been single all my Army career and have lived in the barracks the entire time. As an NCO and a 29-year-old adult, do I need to have someone dictate to me how much alcohol I can have in my room? Or what hours my friends may stay in my room? What justifies my first sergeant coming into my room whenever he wants to inspect and then not going over to a married soldier's house, unannounced, to "see how he or she is living"?

I understand the need to have some control over the barracks (inventories of government-owned furniture, health and welfare inspections, etc.). At the same time, am I to be treated as a second-class soldier, in constant need of supervision and direction, no matter what my rank and age, just because I haven't, as yet, decided to get married or have a child?

*SGT James L. Rechin, Jr.
USAG, Ft. Monmouth, NJ*

Re-examine beliefs, show some respect for single soldier

I've done a slow burn ever since reading SSG Muldoon's letter (Spring 95). The BOSS program has been fighting an

uphill battle against policies touted by SSG Muldoon. He needs to re-examine his beliefs and show more respect for soldiers who happen to be single.

While I'm 42 and single by choice, I reside in the barracks by policy. According to SSG Muldoon, I should be told: How to decorate my room, who may visit me and when, how much or little alcohol I may keep and that I should be grateful for these trespasses on my freedom of choice.

Having a room that you can call your own is not pampering. Having privacy is not pampering. Decorating your room is not pampering. Having visitors of your own choosing in your own room when and for how long you want is not pampering. It's called respect.

I'm not sure what he meant when he said barracks aren't intended to be one's permanent home. Are the barracks non-permanent because a soldier will be moving in three years? Wouldn't family quarters also qualify as non-permanent then?

I can't conceive of married soldiers of any age or rank who would put up with barracks-type restrictions in their family quarters—on- or off-post.

The Army needs to consider making a name change from barracks to billets or single soldier quarters and remove responsibility from the unit and give it to post housing for quartering single soldiers. Only then can we start to remove the stigma of "barracks" living.

*SGT Alan B. Griggs
Ft. Myer, VA*

PCS moves prompt complaints by "beloved NCO Corps"

Time and time again after completing a PCS move and arriving at my new unit, I continue to hear bad things about the units. What makes it really bad, all of the complaining isn't coming from the junior enlisted soldiers. Constant complaining is coming from our beloved NCO Corps.

I understand the majority of NCOs want to lead by example, but this one example of unprofessionalism is definitely not needed. We as NCOs need to set the

example, which means supporting our leaders, units and country. We need not hinder our daily mission by bringing down the morale of our soldiers—which is being done by continuing to point out all the things that are wrong. Instead, we need to keep soldiers motivated. Take time out and show your soldiers the good things about being wherever you may be located. Use that energy not to worsen situations, but to better them.

*SGT Robert L. Smith, III
A Co, 6/43d ADA, APO AE*

PT failure can stop career

All NCOs at some point in their career will attend an NCOES course. On day one you will take the APFT. If you fail, you won't have three weeks for a retest, you won't have two weeks to adjust to altitude, climate or weather. You'll go back to your duty station as a failure without a second chance.

Now more than ever, a PT failure can be a career-stopper. We must meet the standards at all times and we can't focus on just the minimum standards.

When I was in the final phase of the Battle Staff Course at Ft. Bliss, TX, we lost a few soldiers after the retest (no longer used).

Two other soldiers and I came to this class from Ft. Wainwright, AK. We all passed and did fairly well, despite the differences between the areas. Bottom line? The excuses won't wash.

Accept the fact that stress and change will affect your body and mind. Adjust your training to focus on the maximum—not the minimum. Your career could depend on it.

*SFC Samuel W. Downs, Jr.
HHC, 1st Bde, Ft. Wainwright, AK*

Those aggravating acronyms

I would like to correct Thomas S. Prohaska's corrections concerning acronym corrections (Spring 95).

This former NCO criticizes a soldier who stated on a promotion board that LCE stood for Load Carrying Equipment and STB stood for Supertropical

Bleach. The soldier Prohaska criticized is absolutely correct. According to STP 21-SCMT (Oct 94) and STP 21-24-SMCT (Oct 92), LCE is referred to as Load Carrying Equipment. According to FM 3-5, NBC Decontamination, dated Nov 93, STB does stand for Supertropical Bleach. I haven't checked the label on the 50-gallon drums, but I'm sure the regulation will suffice.

It's a shame this "squared away" soldier probably failed the promotion/soldier of the month board due to this NCO's ignorance and lack of general military knowledge.

I do agree that study guides are the absolute worst documents for study materials. Army pubs constantly change and local study guides can't keep up with the changes. If one is used, all questions should be referenced and backed up with a regulation before using it as a study guide. Also, visit your local education center to see if the regulations have been updated or rescinded.

*SSG Kenneth G. Blasko
Ft. Detrick, MD*

Check CURRENT regulations before expressing opinion

SSG Kilgore (Spring 95) said the Army's promotion system hadn't changed since 1982. Army Regulation 600-8-19, effective 1 November 91 and Interim Change Number: 101, dated 8 April 94 are the current Army Regulations that govern the CURRENT promotion system. Lack of knowledge can lead subordinates to believe that an NCO will say anything to get a soldier to stop expressing his concerns and beliefs.

I also believe the promotion system is unfair. I have 736 promotion points out of a possible 800. I'm still pursuing civilian education but I think the current promotion system promotes combat arms MOSes more than others. Granted the Army needs combat arms NCOs, but a shortage in one MOS shouldn't preclude a soldier in an overstrength MOS such as mine (75B) from being promoted. Defense budget allows for so many promotions per month throughout

the Army and most of these promotions are being taken by combat arms soldiers who are afforded the time and opportunity to obtain points. I've obtained 130 of my 150 military education points from correspondence courses, PLDC and BNCOC. So it's possible to obtain a lot of points without having to take civilian college classes—which is often used as an excuse for not having many points. A lot of 75Bs are obviously out busting their chops and being competitive because no one with 736 points has been promoted since August 94.

To all those soldiers in the same boat I'm in, BE PATIENT.

*SGT Anthony P. Harbison
Babenhausen, Germany*

Personal hygiene in the field

When a unit is "deployed" to the field, deployment should simulate a real world mission. This doesn't mean we run to the rear to take showers every couple of days. To train soldiers, we must perform personal hygiene in the field.

However, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) makes this almost impossible. They seem more worried about a spot on the ground than a soldier staying clean. The last time I heard, they were still making biodegradable soap.

The Army has portable showers in its inventory but the EPA says it's a "no go." As NCOs, it's our job to insure that soldiers stay clean and healthy in the field.

*CPL Noel D. Severson
Ft. Gordon, GA*

OOTW old hat to EOD soldiers

Your Winter 94-95 issue dealt with Operations Other Than War (OOTW) as if Army units had never done OOTW missions—something Explosive Ordnance Disposal soldiers have been doing for many years. How about a story on an EOD unit?

*SFC Everett A. Johnson
Ft. Monmouth, NJ*

[Good suggestion, SFC Johnson. How about writing such an article for us? Ed.]