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Letters

Why are you in the Army?

When I was about to graduate from high school and join the Army in 1988, I was a bit nervous about how difficult my life might become. My older brother, another service member, advised me, “Don’t quit something because you don’t like it. Quit because you’ve found something better to do.” Over 14 years later, his advice is still sound. I can’t think of anything better to do than serving in our Army.

It’s important to think about why you’re in the Army from time to time. After reflection, I’ve outlined some important reasons why I enjoy serving:

Working with NCOs. I’ve seen some of the best examples of leadership in the Army while working with NCOs. When I think of training leaders, I’m reminded of one command sergeant major’s well-run NCO Development Program and the way he took a personal interest in helping soldiers and NCOs face challenges and grow. When it comes to setting the example, I think of a certain first sergeant who could outrun anyone in the company and knew more about maintaining our tracked vehicles than most of the mechanics, but inspired them all to excel instead of pointing out their shortcomings. I think of a sergeant first class who, when it comes to competence, was an expert in absolutely every area of light combat engineer knowledge, tactics, and skill. For sacrifice, I’m reminded of a staff sergeant who gave up a coveted platoon sergeant job so he could deploy with rest of the company to Bosnia and support it as the Operations NCO. In the area of motivation, I think of a sergeant who trains cadets on light infantry platoon operations. He actually got them excited about digging individual fighting positions in the sweltering heat of July.

Challenge. Every day in the Army is a challenge. Every day is a call to excel. The call may come as an Army Physical Fitness Test, a training exercise, an inspection of your unit, or even a counseling session with a soldier who has financial problems. Some days there are more challenges than we might want, but there’s never a shortage. I can’t imagine what it would be like to work in a job or profession that doesn’t challenge you. I hope I never have to find out.

Camaraderie. Not every person in the Army is your best friend, but everyone you serve with, train with, deploy with, or undergo any other hardship together is your comrade. I’m sure there are people you’ve argued with over how to accomplish a given mission or task, but they’re still your comrades. What is a comrade? It’s someone you’d bend over backwards to help out 10 years after you’ve last seen them. It’s also someone who would do the same for you.

Focus. Everyone wants to be in the best unit, ready for war or any other mission our country gives them. To paraphrase Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, “Nobody goes down to the recruiter and says ‘I want to join the Army so I can screw up.’” Everyone wants to do their best. If you can acknowledge that motivation, the rest of the work is helping them learn the skills and techniques to be individually competent, along with developing the teamwork to work well as a unit. I’m not saying that it’s easy. It’s a challenge for everyone, but I appreciate that we’re all focused on the same end state — competent soldiers in trained and ready units.

Service. Every enlisted soldier, every NCO and every officer serves their Army and their country every day. Whether qualifying on a weapon, maintaining a vehicle or providing medical aid to an injured family member... all of us provide an invaluable service that helps our unit readiness, directly or indirectly. In doing everyday activities, we make our Army better prepared to serve the nation.

Your list probably doesn’t agree with mine. That’s okay, because this article isn’t about whether my list is correct. It’s about your list. Take the time to think about your own personal list and write it down. Then share it with a quality enlisted soldier, NCO, or officer who you know is thinking about getting out of our Army. If you want to help them make a good decision, share your perspective on why you enjoy serving in the Army. They’ll make their own decision, but at least you’ll help them make an informed one.

Capt. Brian J. Lunday
West Point, N.Y.

High standards for all?

I am deeply dismayed at the published quote on the back of the Summer 2002 edition by deceased President Woodrow Wilson. The fact of the matter is that President Wilson’s standards were “so high,” he literally “re-segregated” the military, the country and the White House after a brief period of equality for African Americans. History books were changed during this period, and White and Black people were separated based on his “high standards.” President Wilson would have been appalled to have his “high standards” quote beneath the photograph of an African American soldier like the one [the “Journal”] displayed. The crown President Wilson spoke of so eloquently in his address to the soldiers in 1917 was a crown specifically intended for one race. I strongly suggest you do your research before publishing insults to injuries for hundreds of African American soldiers during Wilson’s tenure. “American Patriots” by Gail Buckley is a good start.

Sgt. 1st Class Lamont C. Gilliam
Dublin, Ohio

I selected the quote referred to, and I was indeed unaware of its impact on to the African American community. All who found the remark offensive have my apology.

Sgt. 1st Class (Ret.) Phil Tegtmeier
Managing Editor

Behind the changes to your *NCO Journal*

With this issue, we welcome a new year and a new design for the *NCO Journal*. You will hopefully notice some changes. We've added more pages, gone to a full-color format and made a few adjustments to our editorial content.

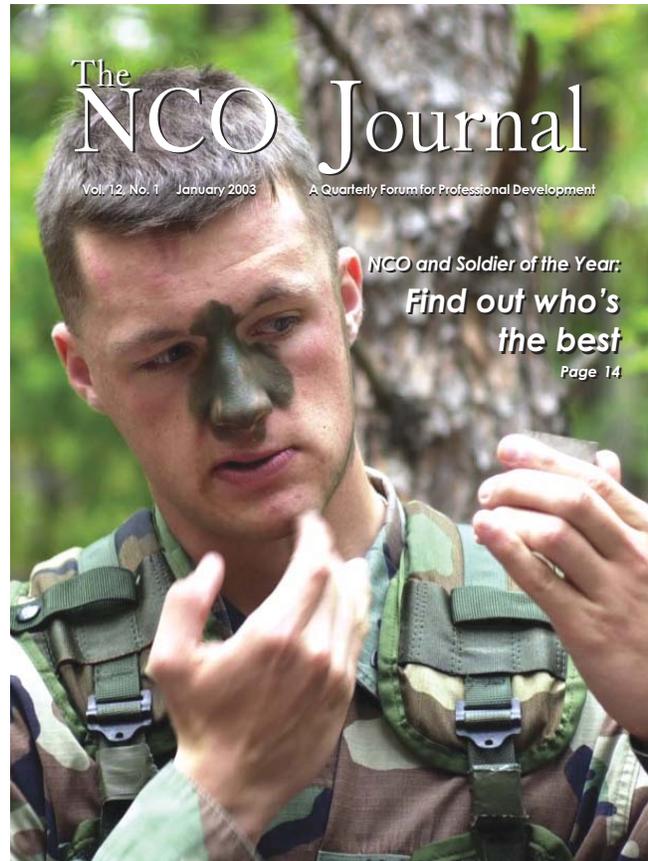
Some of the articles are shorter and more to the point. These changes are an attempt to accommodate NCOs who are incredibly busy and only have time to scan the pages of the *Journal*. Several of the articles offer some sort of guidance that NCOs can incorporate into their training or missions. We can always learn from other's experience. An example of this is Command Sgt. Major Frank Grippe's story of his soldiers – 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry of the 10th Mountain Division – and what they faced during their first firefight in Afghanistan and why they were ready for the challenge.

The *Journal* will continue to spotlight excellence in the NCO ranks, as we have in this issue with the story on Sgt. 1st Class Jeffery Stitzel and Spc. Justin Brown, the Army's first NCO and Soldier of the Year.

The *Journal* will also continue to be a source of news for NCOs, reporting on trends, publications and even Web sites that can assist you in your duties. In other words, news you can use.

Like every other aspect of the Army, the *Journal* is a work in progress; it's an evolving publication. The *Journal* staff cannot presume to know what NCOs across the Army want to read in the *Journal*. And so, for the first time in five years, the *NCO Journal* staff is conducting a readership survey. You will find it on Page 31. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete. Or if you'd prefer to complete the survey online, you can log onto <http://usasma.bliss.army.mil/journal>.

What we can assure you will remain unchanged is the fact that this is your *Journal*. The *NCO Journal* will always be a publication that is the voice of the Army's NCO Corps. And, since you are the boots on the ground, it is your



perspective that *Journal* wants to share with the rest of the Army. As such, we still ask for your articles, story ideas, letters and feedback.

We look forward to your articles and feedback.

Master Sgt. Lisa Hunter
Editor in Chief

Submission guidelines for articles, artwork

We recently revised our editorial requirements to open up the pages of the *NCO Journal* to a wider variety of subjects. We will no longer adhere to a theme for each issue, for example. Instead, we encourage soldiers in the field to submit from 100 to 1,000 words on any subject that will benefit other members of the NCO Corps. The best articles will be brief and will discuss creative solutions to common challenges. When sending us electronic versions of manuscripts, please save your document either as a Microsoft Word™ document or in a rich-text-format (.rtf) file. Send manuscripts to the e-mail address below.

Artwork and photographs to accompany articles will be helpful in illustrating the message in the text. We will accept photos, drawings, sketches and diagrams in a variety of formats. We prefer to receive electronic versions of artwork. When sending photos as e-mail

attachments, send them as .jpg files no larger than 1.5MB. Send one photo per e-mail; our mail server limits attachment sizes. If you send a PowerPoint document, include the individual artwork files used in building the slide. The same is true for MS Word documents containing graphic elements. Contact us for further information on formats and graphics ideas.

All submissions can be sent by e-mail, fax or mail. For e-mail, send to atss-sj-ncojournal@bliss.army.mil. Our fax is DSN 978-8540 or comm. (915) 568-8540. Our mailing address appears on the inside front cover each issue.

When thinking of ideas for submission, it helps to consider the *Journal* as the *Popular Mechanics* of the NCO Corps. If you have a creative approach to an issue, share it with your fellow NCOs through the pages of the *NCO Journal*.