

ATSS-MH (870)

MEMORANDUM FOR Commandant, United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas 79918-8002

SUBJECT: Access Agreement for Personal Experience Papers

1. I, Scott P. Spigelmyer, have submitted a Personal Experience Paper to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences from my participation in Kuwait that may be of historical significance to the United States Army and the Noncommissioned Officer Corps.

2. I understand the manuscript and attached documents will be accessioned into the historical holdings of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives and will belong to the United States Government to be used in any manner deemed in the best interests of the United States Army as determined by the Chief of Military History or his representative. I also understand that I may retain a copy for my own use subject to classification restrictions.

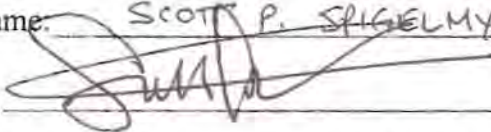
3. I hereby expressly and voluntarily relinquish all rights and interest in the paper to the United States Army with the following caveat/exception:

- () None
() Other:

I understand that the information in this paper may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and therefore, may be releasable to the public contrary to my wishes. I further understand that, within the limits of the law, the United States Army will attempt to honor the restrictions I have requested to be placed on this material.

Date: 14 JUL 10

Printed Name: SCOTT P. SPIGELMYER

Signature: 

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

Printed Name/Date: _____

Signature: _____

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My Journey as a Soldier

SGM Scott P. Spigelmyer

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

NRC 35

SGM Lauri Dove

January 1, 2009

From the time I first enlisted into the U.S. Army in 1982, I have served in the Active Duty (AD) Army, US Army Reserves-Individual Ready Reserves (USAR-IRR), and the Army National Guard (ARNG) as both a traditional M-Day and Active Guard (AGR) Soldier. This paper will address my various duty assignments and assignments as a member of United States Army. My experiences as a Soldier over the past 21 years have been very unique and I am proud to say that I have positively impacted the lives of many non-prior service applicants, Army National Guardsman, and Active Duty Soldiers alike.

I joined the Army under the delayed entry program on May 27, 1982 in Oklahoma City, OK. Growing up, I always wanted to become a paratrooper so I choose the MOS of 11X with an airborne option. On August 3, 1982, I reported to Fort Jackson, SC for reception station and in-processing. One week later, I arrived at Fort Benning, GA for One Station Unit Station (OSUT). I was assigned to B 2/2 INF in Harmony Church and I learned that my MOS would be 11B light infantry. 13 long weeks later on November 7th, 1982, I graduated OSUT and was transferred to the Airborne Training Battalion at Fort Benning to attend the 3 week basic airborne course. I graduated airborne school and learned that my next duty assignment would be the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, NC.

I reported into the 82nd Replacement Company on 4 December 1982 and after in-processing, I was assigned to Co C, 1/504th Abn Inf battalion. Over the next 18 months, I served in various duty positions to include rifleman, automatic rifleman, grenadier, assistant gunner and M-60 machine gunner. Some of the highlights during my time in 1/504 Abn Infantry were deployments to Spain and Panama.

The invasion of Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury, kicked off on Oct 13th, 1983 and unfortunately, my battalion was one of only two in division did not deploy. We were already

committed to an exercise with the Spanish army so instead of going to Grenada, we jumped into a drop zone near Seville, Spain. The area had not received any rain in nearly two months so in effort to reduce jump injuries, the drop zone was plowed to provide softer landings. I was told that about 12 hours before we jumped in, it started to rain. By the time we jumped, the fields had become so muddy that it was almost impossible to walk in much less operate vehicles in. After sitting under a poncho in the pouring rain all night, the decision was made to cancel the exercise and we were transported back to a Spanish military base for recovery. Over the next 3 days, we cleaned our equipment and prepared jump back in Fort Bragg. As it turned out, we landed back at Pope Air Force base instead because nearly every single Soldier in the battalion ended up getting dysentery and was unable to jump.

In January 1984, my battalion deployed to Fort Sherman, Panama to attend the Jungle Warfare School. The school was a four week course designed to train how to operate in a jungle environment. It was the best training that I received during my time with the 82nd. The school was challenging and motivating. It was also the first time that I had been to a third world country and it made me appreciate the standard of living that we enjoy in the United States. The jungle is a very difficult environment to operate in and it proved to be so during the battalion FTX. The terrain and vegetation made everything look alike and we ended up getting lost more than once. The most amazing thing during the exercise was a Panamanian family appearing out of nowhere with ice-cold Cokes and oranges wanting to trade for C-Rations. Those cokes never looked so good.

After the first 18 months, I had an opportunity to transfer to Alpha Troop, 1/17th Abn Cavalry Squadron, 82nd Airborne Division. I was assigned to the Aero Rifle Platoon as a pathfinder. My job was to provide support to 1st Brigade for all airmobile and field exercises. As

the Brigade pathfinder, I inspected all sling loaded vehicles and equipment prior to air mobile exercises and operated the LZ during the exercise. After being in an infantry line battalion, this assignment was a pleasure because it provided opportunities that I would have never received if I had stayed in 1/504. During my time in the cavalry, I deployed back to Panama and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Ca in support of various 1st Brigade missions. After three years in the Army, I was promoted to SGT and was reassigned as the unit training NCO. This assignment allowed me to see another side of the Army and I become interested in reclassifying into an aviation MOS. However, since I was an 11B E-5, I was given two options: reenlist 6 years present duty assignment and be sent back to a line battalion in Division or get out. I had seen what years in an airborne infantry battalion did to the body and given my enlistment options, I decided to ETS and go to College. On June 2, 1986, I was discharged from AD and transferred to the USAR-IRR.

After six months in the IRR, I decided to reenlist as an 11H Anti Armor Infantryman into Co C 2/180th Infantry, 45th Infantry Division, Oklahoma Army National Guard (OKARNG) as a traditional M-Day Soldier. This MOS allowed me to remain Infantry but gave me a chance to get on a different weapons system. During the next 18 months, I also served as the company NBC NCO and attended the NBC NCO training course at Fort Sill, OK. After completing my six year Military Service Obligation (MSO), I decided to ETS from the OKARNG on February 2, 1989 and moved to Conway, South Carolina to attend the University of South Carolina-Coastal Carolina College.

For the next five years, I concentrated on my education but missed the brotherhood of military service and so on May 5th, 1994, I reenlisted as an 11H into Co E, 1/120th Infantry Bn, 30th Infantry Brigade, North Carolina Army National Guard (NCARNG) as an M-Day Soldier.

This unit was different from the OKARNG because the TOW weapons platform was mounted on a M113 rather than a HUMMV. Because of my break in service, I was required to take an administrative reduction to E-4. This was the first of two administrative reductions that I have taken as a member of the ARNG.

At the time, I was working two different jobs and wasn't enjoying what I was doing so I decided to apply for an AGR Recruiting and Retention NCO (R&R NCO) in March of 1995. I went to our annual training exercise (AT) at Fort Bragg, NC on May 2, 1995 and when we came out of the field on the 14th, I learned that I was being promoted back to E-5 and hired into the Title 32 State AGR program as a R&R NCO in HQ, STARC, Raleigh, NC effective May 15, 1995.

As an R&R NCO, my job was to be a full time ARNG recruiter as well as a battalion Retention NCO two weekends a month. Within 3 weeks of being hired, I was sent to the National Guard Professional Education (PEC) at Camp Robinson, Arkansas to become an ARNG R&R NCO. Upon graduation, I was awarded MOS's as a 00E recruiter and a 79R Retention NCO.

From July 5th, 1995 to Sep 30th, 1997, I worked in the Elizabeth City/ Albemarle Sound area of Northeastern North Carolina. My primary recruiting market consisted of high school juniors and seniors spread out over the seven county area. This part of the state is very rural and most jobs in the Area were either agricultural or low wage service based positions. The region suffers from a high rate of unemployment and as a result, the majority of people in the area were poor in both income and opportunities. In many cases, the conditions in which people lived were appalling. Many high school students had no chance of ever attending college because their parents could not afford to send them. Chances of a higher standard of living and better life were

not seen as a possibility for many. As a recruiter, I can honestly say that I made a real difference in a lot of young people's lives and futures. By enlisting into the NCARNG, I offered the possibility for an individual to attend any state supported college within the state and have their educational paid for by the NCARNG. The heartfelt thanks that I received from many parents for providing their child an opportunity for a better life cannot be expressed in words. On May 1, 1997, I was promoted to Staff Sergeant.

On October 2nd, 1997, I was reassigned to Fayetteville, NC. The recruiting market historically consisted of Prior Service applicants. These were Soldiers that had ETS'ed from Fort Bragg and remained in the Fayetteville area. I was PCS'ed in effort to improve the educational market in Cumberland County. In 1997 and 1998, I had the opportunity to serve in the traditional role of the National Guard: State active duty missions to provide hurricane relief to affected citizens of northeastern North Carolina. We provided food and shelter in armories to those in need. We also helped to restore water, power and communications. Again, I felt as if I made a difference in the lives of people in need of help.

On May 1st, 2001, I was promoted to Master Sergeant and became the R&R Area 2 NCOIC. The state was broken in 8 recruiting areas and as an ARNG Recruiting Area NCOIC, my job was the same as a USAREC Recruiting 1SG: I managed the Area's recruiting yearly mission, multiple recruiting stations and recruiting station commanders, and oversaw 2 separate recruiting sustainment programs. I worked with my recruiters by assisting with interviews, school visits, presentations, and programs. The National Guard finally realized that the only way to increase its end strength was to control retention losses. In efforts to improve pipeline attrition, North Carolina developed a recruit sustainment program (RSP) that was conducted twice a month. All non-prior service applicants (REP 63's) would attend this training one weekend a

month up until they shipped to BCT, AIT, or OSUT. The training was conducted by the recruiters within each Area and it served several purposes: provided initial indoctrination of Army customs and courtesies as well as taught common core tasks skills required at BCT. It also kept REP 63's motivated and allowed you to monitor their progress ensuring they met required height and weight standards and would ship off to training. With the development of the RSP program, pipeline attrition of NPS applicants was reduced from nearly 30 percent to 12 percent.

The most eye opening fact that I learned as the R& R NCOIC was that not everyone shared the same work ethic or attitude that I did. I thought that everyone wanted to be a superstar but reality, that's not the case. If you have 10 recruiters that work for you, you might have two superstars, six that are content with being successful, and two that doesn't care if they are successful or not. The challenge is keeping your lead horses motivated to continue to overproducing while motivating your overachievers to improve their production.

In May of 2004, I made the decision to leave the State Title 32 AGR program. North Carolina was only authorized two E-9 79T positions and they had just promoted other two MSGs to SGM. I knew that it would probably be at least six to eight years until either position would become vacant so rather than sit and wait years to be considered for promotion, I chose to take an administrative reduction to SFC and go to the Title 10 Federal AGR program as a Reserve Component Career Counselor (RCCC).

On December 1, 2004, I PCS'ed from JFHQ, NCARNG and was assigned to National Guard Bureau in Alexandria, VA with attachment orders to the 284th BSB in Giessen, GE. In Giessen, I was the RCCC that supported 1st Brigade and Engineer Brigade, 1st Armored Division. As a RCCC, my job was to provide mandatory counseling to all separating AD Soldiers on how

they could fulfill their remaining MSO as a member of the USAR or ARNG as well as options, opportunities, and benefits available thru reserve component affiliation.

The Reserve Component (RC) mission is one of five categories that make up the total Army retention mission. You work hand in hand with AD Career Counselors to ensure that their commander's RC mission is made. In many ways, you are still a recruiter because you are asking a Soldier who made the decision to ETS from AD to continue their service by affiliating with a reserve component. These Soldiers are informed consumers. They have spent three years or more on active duty and know exactly what the Army is about. You have to be an honest broker and show the value of their continued service in such a way that they make the conscious decision to remain on the total Army team.

On August 1st, 2005, I was promoted back to MSG and PCSed to Vicenza, Italy to become the Southern European Task Force (Airborne) Senior RCCC. SETAF and the 173rd Airborne Brigade were already deployed in Afghanistan so I was basically out of work for next nine months because no one was ETSing and the few that were being separated were not eligible for RC affiliation. The only thing I could do was prepare for their return.

SETAF and the 173rd began their redeployment to Caserme Ederle in the beginning of March and by the end of the month, everyone was back and in the process of reintegration. Prior to deployment, nearly 550 Soldiers had their ETS dates adjusted. 275 had an ETS date of 31 May 2006 and another 130 had an ETS date of 30 June 2006. The remaining 145 Soldiers were spread out over 4th quarter FY 06. There was no way to possibly work all of these Soldiers all by myself so I did two things: I started the interview process by gathering information on each Soldier during the first or third day of reintegration and asking for assistance with counseling from other RCCC's during the surge. By having Soldier fill out the interview worksheet during their

financial in processing, I was able to find out where the Soldier was going when they separated and look up options and opportunities available with both the ARNG and USAR specific to that zip code prior to the Soldier showing up for their final out processing appointment. This information was critical because commanders waived the 30 day block leave policy and allowed Soldiers who had enough saved leave to start out processing immediately after completing reintegration. This only gave me and the other RCCC's one shot to contract the Soldier. After being downrange twice within the past three years, most Soldiers who waived their block leave to start out processing early had no desire to talk to anyone about joining the ARNG or USAR. Secondly, by bringing additional counselors to help with the surge, all separating Soldiers were able to receive their mandatory ETS counseling. As a direct result of these two actions, the SETAF and 173rd Abn Bde achieved their assigned FY 06 RC retention missions.

In December 2006, it was announced that the 173rd Abn Bde was redeploying back to Afghanistan for another rotation and in March 2007, stop loss took effect. Since there was no need for a RCCC for the next 15 months, on June 1st, 2007, I was PCSed to Camp Casey, Korea to serve as the Senior RCCC for FIRES Bde and DSTB, 2nd Infantry Division. Korea was different from the other locations I worked because no units are currently deploying out of the peninsula. This allows you to counsel Soldiers in accordance with AR 601-280 and start doing initial interviews at 180 days prior to separation. It also provides the Soldier ample time to make an informed decision on options, opportunities, and methods of fulfillment available to them with the reserve components. On July 1, 2008, I was promoted to SGM and PCSed to Yongsan, Korea to serve as the 8th U.S. Army Reserve Component Command Career Counselor.

On September 31, 2009, I deployed to Camp Buehring, Kuwait to serve as the Army National Guard Theater Retention SGM. My mission was to provide retention oversight and

policy interpretation to all Army National Guard units deployed in the CENTCOM AOR.

Primary duties included providing retention training and support to units as they deployed into Kuwait and conducting site visits to units in Afghanistan and Iraq in effort to measure and enhance the effectiveness of their retention programs.

Units come into Camp Buehring, Kuwait for mandatory training prior to movement into Iraq. Upon their arrival, I would do an initial meet and greet with unit leadership to identify whether they had a trained unit retention NCO (URNCO) in place and to offer retention training for those who did not. I discovered that there were four types of units arriving in theater: those who had a dedicated AGR Retention Team with them (10%), those who brought AGR Retention individuals with them but had those Soldiers in other key positions within the organization (25%), those with URNCOs who were traditional M-Day Soldiers on appointment orders (40%), and those who didn't have an appointed URNCO (25%).

During our site visits to Afghanistan and Iraq, I would conduct desk-side and town hall briefings with ARNG Soldiers to inform them about current reenlistment incentives and programs available while deployed. I would also provide advice to unit leadership ensuring that relevant retention policy and regulatory guidance was understood and being followed. Most of the times, we would also conduct refresher or initial retention training to URNCO's as well.

Lessons learned from this deployment are that retention must be embraced from the start of the mobilization. For many units, retention was an afterthought until the tail end of their deployment. URNCOs should be on appointment orders and be trained on the most current policies and regulatory guidance prior to departing CONUS. To ensure that this training occurs, my recommendation is to incorporate this as mandatory training done at the respective mobilization site. OPTEMPO and the training requirements necessary prior to unit movement in

theater creates a schedule so tight that it is difficult to squeeze any retention training while at Camp Buehring. In most cases, especially in ARNG Bde sized elements, retention training took place 60 to 90 days after the unit moved into theater and got into a battle rhythm.

Over the past 21 years of military service, the one thing I have learned is it's all about taking care of Soldiers. As a young Soldier, it was my NCO's who mentored and took care of me. Without their direction and guidance, I would have never been made it through my first enlistment. It was my desire to become part of something bigger than myself that in 1994 convinced me to reenlist after a five year break in service. As a NCO, I had mentors who believed in and pushed me to perform at the highest levels. They saw potential and provided a support structure that afforded professional growth and progression that I would have never thought possible.

As a recruiter, I recognized this same potential in the many faces of young men and women that I enlisted into the NCARNG. By showing that I believed in them, they were able to achieve almost anything that they set their minds to. As a SGM, my job is to motivate and mentor all Soldiers, including all those for those who work from me, those to decide to leave active duty, as well as my active duty career counselor brethren. It's all about the Soldier and the team! One Team, One Fight, One Mission, ARMY STRONG, HOOAH!