

Ethics Thought Paper

by

MSG Regenal B. Smith

SGM Britton

Group Room R01

15 October 2004

Ethics

As we move farther into the new millennium, we as Senior Non-Commission officers must be the role models and standards bearers for the new generation of Soldiers. Our Ethics should and must be the moral compass for the next and future war-fighters. So we must evaluate what it is that makes us professionals. What it is that we believe in? To do this we need to look no farther than what Ethics means to us. The dictionary has many definitions and meanings to the word Ethics. And the one that stood out me the most was that Ethics is the moral choices an individual makes in relating to others.

Lets' look at the specific moral choices an individual makes in relating to others." As Senior Non-Commissioned officers we have a duty to mentor our subordinates by teaching, coaching and counseling. We do this by living the Army's values. We need to teach them to make the right choices, to take the hard right over the easy one. This is the reason we need to step in and coach them to do the right thing. And we must provide them with effective counseling when they do not. Is it right to take office supplies home, just because everybody does it? This is what Ethics is all about; if no one is around will we do the right thing.

So exactly what are the rules and standards of conduct that apply to us as members of the armed forces? They are the rules and regulations that govern our conduct as we go about our daily duties. Most are social norms that we have had since we were

young that helped to build our personalities and shape our character.

As senior enlisted, we have all faced these types of questions at one time or another. We see our peers and other Non-Commissioned Officers put in situations where they have had to make these choices. How they make their decision is a direct reflection on their personalities and character, and the kind of leaders they had as young Soldiers.

In the Army of the future we all need to do our part to change those attitudes that in the past were acceptable. When we go to visit our troops in the field, we need to take a long look at do we really need the VIP suite on base, instead of roughing it with our Soldiers in the field?

We as senior leaders must not forget, that the best example we can set for our Soldiers is to lead from the front and give them more than just lip service. We must always remember that we are leader's first, and must set the example by showing up for field exercises, doing physical training. We do this from the front, not the office. The Sergeant Major is always looked up to, young Soldiers are always looking for you to lead and mentor them. Do not believe for one minute that they are not watching you. It's your action and not your words that will get your Soldiers trust. As the old saying goes "Action speaks louder than words".

The Sergeant Major must live the Army Value, the Army and our Soldiers expect nothing less. We all make mistakes, its how

we deal with those mistakes that we sometimes lose our Soldiers. We must also take into account that it is not just the Soldiers we lead that judge us. It's our peers and superiors that look to see if we are living by some type of morals and values.

We must always handle ourselves in an ethical and moral way. The decisions we make as Sergeant Major's effect the lives of many. We must realize that as the senior enlisted leaders of our organization, Soldiers will act on our orders. The mothers and fathers of our great nation, rely on us to take care of their children. Will we as Sergeant Majors always get it right? Of course not, but that's not to say that we're not trying. Because it the one mistake we make that can cost a Soldiers their life. But as long as you did what you did based on the welfare of the Soldier and it can pass the ethical and moral compass it will be a lot easier to accept. There are plenty of things we can do as the Sergeant Major; the most important will be setting a climate and atmosphere that breeds values. We must let our subordinates know that unethical and immoral behavior will not be tolerated. The way we do this is to make sure that our integrity is above reproach and that everyone know that without a doubt that this is non-negotiable.