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Ethics

As Senior Noncommissioned officers we are role models for the young Soldiers that are coming up through the ranks. We are on display with every move taken. The younger Soldiers watch our every move and their decision process is based on what they learn from our actions. If we as leaders are the standard bearers for the next generation of Soldiers, We are obligated to set the example.

As professionals we must have parameters to govern our actions. The structure of these parameters comes from our Values and beliefs. Webster defines Ethics as the study of the general nature of morals and the specific moral choices an individual makes in relating to others. Webster also states that ethics are the rules or standards of conduct governing the members of a profession. It is our obligation as leaders to teach, coach and mentor our Soldiers to do the right thing. As I have stated before we are under deep scrutiny with every step we take.

Being a Soldier takes discipline, just because we lace up our boots everyday and button up our Battle Dress Uniform, does not make us soldiers. The soldierization process starts with the first day of Basic Training and it is a continuous process throughout our military career.

As we live our daily lives as Senior Noncommissioned Officers we see that ethics are and will always play a major role in our profession. We are all products of our environment. I was taught by a great mentor of mine that Soldiers learn from two major processes which are repetition and significant emotional events. The Soldiers that we

train watch our actions on a daily bases and take our actions to be the Gospel. That is why it is so important that we conduct ourselves in a professional manner day in and day out. We should always make a conscious effort to practice doing the right thing. It is important to think before we act. Our thought process govern the decisions that we make. Our thoughts become our words, our words become our actions, and our actions make us who we are and what others perceive us to be.

Good ethics is all about doing the right thing regardless if anyone is around or not. As I stated earlier the soldierization never ends. When a Soldier enters basic training he/she is given a set of rules that are designed to assist in governing their actions. These set of rules are known to use as the seven Army Values. They are as follows Leadership, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage. If Soldiers govern themselves according to these rules they should not have a problem with their Ethical values. All of the values are strong but the one that sticks out in my mind is Integrity, which states “do what is right, legally and morally”. Its focus is to guide Soldiers to do the right thing even when no one is looking. It is an inner voice which serves as our moral compass to keep us ethically on course.

Another guide the Army gives us is the Noncommissioned Officers Creed. The NCO creed starts with these strong words, “No one is more professional than I”. Just those words alone, puts me in the mind set to do the right thing. Of the many definitions given for the word professionalism the one that sticks out mostly in my mind is this. “Professional is characterized by or conforming to the technical or ethical standards of a profession”. The NCO creed goes on to say “I am proud of the Corps of the Noncommissioned Officer and will at all times conduct myself so as to bring credit upon

the Corp, military service and my country regardless of the situation in which I find myself.” When I reflect on the words, Corp, Military service and Country, automatically a sense of responsibility is imbedded in my thought process that will guide me to do the right thing. As I read the words “I will not compromise my Integrity or my moral courage” these words further reinforces that belief. In my opinion, Integrity is the strongest asset that we possess as a leader and if we don’t believe this, we could not lead soldiers effectively. Senior leaders sometimes lose site of the fact being promoted into positions of leadership mandates us to lead from the front. We must always remember that we are leader’s first and managers second.

I can recall over the years, as a Drill Sergeant, the compromising positions that some Noncommissioned Officers placed themselves. As leaders they knew prior to committing the infractions that their actions were unacceptable. It seems that the Brigade Sergeants Major’s office was always the resting place for the head gear “Brown Round” of Drill Sergeants that allowed an Ethical dilemma to cloud their better judgment. Talking to some of these Drill Sergeants that were in an unethical situation, I asked them one specific question “what made you do it. More times then not the answer was “I didn’t think I would get caught.” These Drill Sergeants violated strict standards of conduct. The actions taken by these so called leaders were ethically and morally wrong. America gives us her children to train, not abuse. These young men and women are to be the leaders of tomorrow and to abuse them in any way is criminal. As Noncommissioned Officer’s the Drill Sergeant’s we are the first example of leadership that the Soldier comes in contact with. To abuse that authority for their personal gain is a direct violation of everything this uniform stands for.

I can recall my experiences as a Senior Drill Sergeant during the Aberdeen scandal in which an entire chain of command was involved in the abuse of the trainees. Several of the Drill Sergeants in my company came to me and voiced their concern involving contact with the trainees. They were afraid to do their jobs. They felt all Drill Sergeants were targets due to what had taken place in Aberdeen. But after talking to them about doing the right thing and being professional, they realized that the only people that anything to worry about were the ones committing the infractions. Realizing that their ethical thinking process was in order, those Drill Sergeants that had the concerns continued to lead from the front with outstanding results.

As leaders it is our responsibility to train our soldiers to one day fill the ranks in which we stand today. We will only get out of it what we put in to it. The future of the Noncommissioned Officer corps lies on our shoulders. It is our obligation to teach, coach and mentor these Soldiers to be the best that they can be. We must ensure that they have a strong ethical base to build from. But first we must examine ourselves to determine if we possess the proper values that will serve as that ethical cornerstone for our future leaders to build.