

Running head: SGM CHAVELA COOPER PERSONAL EXPERIENCE PAPER

SGM Chavela Cooper Personal Experience in the United States

Army Reserves

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### Abstract

I made a choice to enter the Army Reserves when I was 27 years old. The contributing factors for this decision were based on survival, economics, and stability. It was early 1988; I was living in Houston, Texas, and working in the oil and gas industry. During this time, the oil and gas industry was “going bust.” Unemployment in Houston was at an all time high. Banks and mortgage companies foreclosed on homes in record numbers, which placed people on the streets. I knew eventually I would receive my “pink slip.” Of course, my biggest concern was how I could survive and hold onto the things I had. If there were nothing else for me in Houston, I knew the military would serve as a haven for shelter and protection.

## SGM Chavela Cooper Personal Experience in the United States Army Reserves

My career spans 18 years in the United States Army Reserves, assigned to the 75<sup>th</sup> Division (Training Support), previously designated the 75<sup>th</sup> Maneuver Area Command (MAC). Looking back over my career, I feel very fortunate to serve my country and contribute to something as phenomenal as the United States Army.

I made a choice to enter the Army Reserves when I was 27 years old. The contributing factors for this decision were based on survival, economics, and stability. It was 1988; I was living in Houston, Texas, and working in the oil and gas industry. During this time, the oil and gas industry was “going bust.” Unemployment in Houston was at an all time high. Banks and mortgage companies foreclosed on homes in record numbers, which placed people on the streets. I knew eventually I would receive my “pink slip.” Of course, my biggest concern was how I could survive and hold onto the things I had. If there were nothing else for me in Houston, I knew the military would serve as a haven for shelter and protection. If necessary, the Reserves offered a pathway to enter Active Duty.

I explored my options with the Naval Air, Air Force, and Army Reserves. I initially leaned toward the Naval Air Reserve. As a matter of fact, I had an opportunity to participate in a weekend drill at the Naval Air Station in New Orleans, LA, prior to making any commitment. Unfortunately, that is how they lost me as a Reservist. I quickly recognized the monthly commute between Houston and New Orleans was very time consuming even though the Navy flew the Reservists to New Orleans. The required lead time for transportation was too great.

Next I considered the Air Force Reserves. However, the closet unit was located near Dallas, TX, approximately 250 miles from Houston, and is a four hour drive. Again, I elected not to make the commute.

Finally, I went to an Army Recruiter to learn more about the Army Reserves and the different units in Houston. The recruiter told me about the 75<sup>th</sup> Maneuver Area Command (MAC). He arranged a tour of the unit and explained the 75<sup>th</sup> history. Once I learned this, I knew I wanted to become a member of the 75<sup>th</sup> MAC.

The history of the 75th Division (Training Support) extends back to its combat days of World War II as the 75th Infantry Division. In April 1943 the unit activated as the 75th Infantry Division at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri...

In November 1950 the 75th Infantry Division re-activated as an Army Reserve Division at Houston, Texas. In February 1952 the 75th Division was allotted to the Organized Reserve Corps. In 1955 the Army deactivated the Division except for a HQs and HHC. This became the origin of the 75th Infantry Division (MAC).

On 15 February 1957, the Army configured the unit into the 75th Maneuver Area Command (MAC), consisting of a HQ and an Umpire Group. The original mission of the 75th Maneuver Area Command (MAC) was to plan and coordinate large-scale maneuvers for units in preparation for their overseas deployment. The mission of the MAC was to train commanders and staffs of Battalion - Corps level units. The 75th MAC was one of two prototype units, along with a sister unit, the 87th MAC in Birmingham, Alabama. The experiences of World War II and the Korean War confirmed in the minds of military planners the need for units to plan and conduct large scale maneuvers prior to the deployment of units. They believed that the stateside maneuvers, that American forces had undergone in World War II, had contributed to their success. The new MAC concept embodied this training agenda by creating the needed command and control centers. The 75th received training responsibility for all the units west of the Mississippi River, while the 87th conducted similar operations in the eastern third of the U.S. (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/75d.htm>).

In May, 1988, I enlisted in the Army Reserves as a Private First Class, and became a member of the 75<sup>th</sup> MAC. Fortunately, I was awarded the Administrative Clerk and Accounting Specialist Military Occupational Skills (MOS) through civilian acquired skills. Therefore, I was not required to attend Advanced Individual Training (AIT).

During September, 1988, I was laid-off by my civilian employer. I contacted my recruiter and set an immediate report date for basic training. Once I completed basic training, I returned to the 75<sup>th</sup>, and in 1992 I became a United States Army Reserve Military Technician.

I started my Reserve career in the Resource Management Office as an Administrative Clerk. Shortly thereafter, I became an Accounting Specialist and then a Budget NCO. Several years later, I transferred to the Internal Review Office and served as the Internal Review NCOIC, conducting audits for the Commander.

During 2001, I transferred to the G6 Office and assumed the duty position as Chief of Information Systems, Master Sergeant. During January, 2003 I was mobilized in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The G6 supported the Fifth Army TAC CP One and Two. The G6 section deployed six personnel to Fort Hood, TX to support the train-up and validation process of two brigade combat teams (BCT) alerted to deploy to Iraq. The first rotation was the 256<sup>th</sup> BCT. The second rotation was the 56<sup>th</sup> BCT from the Texas National Guard. Each rotation lasted approximately four to five months. This mission also required G6 personnel to perform TDY duty at other training platforms such as

Fort Bliss and Fort Polk. The G6 staff replicated at Fort Hood many of the functions performed in Houston. Some of those functions were direct coordination with the installation DOIM for the establishment and maintenance of NIPRNET, SIPRNET, telephone lines and COMSEC support. Other actions included equipment purchase such as computers and peripherals, creation of e-mail accounts; help desk support, issue and management of cell phones and others (75<sup>th</sup> Division Annual Historical Summary, 2004).

Today as a Sergeant Major, I am thankful for the United States Army, United States Army Reserves and the 75<sup>th</sup> Division. These organizations helped me to survive and provided stability in my life. More importantly, I know I received opportunities that elsewhere I could not receive.

### References

The 75<sup>th</sup> Division (Training Support), May 23, 2005. Retrieved on October 3, 2006 from

(<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/75d.htm>).

The 75<sup>th</sup> Division Annual Historical Summary 2004.