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Ethics of Recruits in Rural Areas

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Abstract

This paper reflects my personal thoughts, experiences, observations, and opinions regarding the Ethics of Recruits in rural areas. The motive for this ethics thought paper is to gain a better understanding of these types of Soldiers and to learn a different approach as a leader for them to achieve success in their military career regardless of the environment that they come from. I will discuss what I consider the three main contributing factors: Lack of family involvement, probable/possible use of drugs, and negative influences. In my findings, I have discovered that the majority of these Soldiers were unfortunately a product of their home environment.

Ethics of Recruits in Rural Areas

In my experience, I have found that in rural communities where the Army Reserve places their Reserve Centers the Soldiers that fill those units do not possess a strong background in personal or professional ethics. Their families believe that the Army and its leadership will instill the morals, values, virtues, and ethics into their children that they did not. I believe this is due to three main factors: Lack of family involvement, probable/possible use of drugs, and negative influences. I will discuss each one of these factors in detail throughout this paper.

I wanted to see for myself the exact definition to each of the above-mentioned subjects dealing with ethics. Here are the definitions according to Merriam-Webster. “Morals are modes of conduct. Values, especially of a traditional or conservative kind which are held to promote the sound functioning of the family and to strengthen the fabric of society. Virtues, conformity to a standard of right, and ethics are the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation.”

If parents do not teach their children manners or how to behave throughout their growth process, how can we as leaders implement this change? If principles and standards have not been established or ingrained in our young Soldiers, can we make a difference? If they have no intrinsic worth or qualities that they feel they do not possess, can we instill this in them. Lastly, the most ethical of all dilemmas, can we the Army and its leaders inspire and grow a young Soldier to adapt moral values and principles through our Seven Army Values and our Ethics training? As leaders in today's Army, this I believe is one of our most challenging tasks.

My experience has shown me that this is one the hardest tasks I have ever faced in my career. During my three-year tenure as a First Sergeant I was faced with this challenge on several occasions, I had to dig deep down into each one of my Soldiers and try as hard as I could

to plant the Army seed of values and ethics. While some were resistant and fought me each step of the way, others welcomed this new way of life as they mature and step out on their own. On a few occasions, it seemed that the family was my worst enemy. It appeared they did not want a better life for their son or daughter, but they were the one's insisting "WE" the Army straighten them out.

Drugs played a very serious role in our unit. I had several split option Soldiers, which is an individual who enlists in the Army their junior year of high school and attends basic training, then the following year after graduating from high school they attend their Advanced Individual Training (AIT) and become a qualified member of the unit. As a leader, this was my second most challenging tasks, maintaining a Soldier for two years before they became Military Occupational Specialty Qualified (MOSQ). My unit lost between two to five Soldiers every urinalysis, and they were all split option Soldiers. Most of them did not take this offense seriously, and according to Army regulations, my Commander and I had no choice but to separate them from the Army. They did not even give their selves or their future a chance. The sad thing about this, is not one parent of a Soldier we separated ever contacted us to try to save them! Again, where are the parents and what a sad role they play in their children's lives?

One of the most difficult situations that my Commander and I faced was a young man, split option Soldier whose father was a retired First Sergeant and his older brother was a Sergeant who appeared to have a very promising future in the Army. This 17-year-old Soldier came up positive for Marijuana on the urinalysis. During his counseling with the Commander and me, he completely broke down; begged and pleaded for just one more chance. He promised the Commander and I that given the opportunity, he would not let us down. I explained to him that not only did he let his Chain of Command down, he let his fellow comrades down, but also

he was his own worst enemy. He himself was keeping him from a promising future and career in the military. This was quite the dilemma, after all this Soldier's military future laid in our hands. Of all the other Soldiers who we had counseled, none of them had reacted like this one. No one of the others wanted a second chance, they just wanted out of the Army. Knowing what our guidance was, the Commander and I both felt we stood up for this Soldier and attempt to save him and try to salvage what little career he had. With the support of our Battalion Commander and Command Sergeant Major, we were able to retrain this Soldier. In looking back at the situation I have to wonder had his father and brother not been in the military, would this Soldier have had the reaction that he did? Deep down, the Commander and I both knew we would have done a great injustice not trying to save this Soldier. I am proud of the decision that we made.

Lack a family involvement, or family negativity against the Army. I had a Soldier who came to the unit from the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR); she had been in there for a few years and had decided to join our unit with the help of a Retention NCO. This particular Soldier was in her early 30's; she was a single parent and lived at home with her Mother. In getting to know her better and her being able to express her wishes for her future and the future of her daughter, she was seriously considering joining the Active Army. As her 1SG, I was very proud of this decision and supported her 100% in achieving her goal. As soon as her mother found out that, she had taken the necessary actions to join the Active Army, and begin a career and have an opportunity to escape her environment. She came down to the reserve center and made her daughter resign from the Army Reserve and informed me and the active duty recruiter that she would no longer be a member of the military because it meant she would no longer receive a social security check! I thought I was going to faint, I could not believe my ears. The recruiter and I attempted to contact her, but neither of us was ever successful after that day.

In closing, I believe that throughout my military career I have made a difference in some of these types of Soldiers. As a First Sergeant, given all of the tools the Army provides us, I feel that I have used them to the best of my ability to instill ethics and values in those Soldiers who others wise would not have known the difference. Not only did I teach them with the use of training aids, as a leader I always try my best to display at all times the ethics that my parents instilled in me. I also do my best to display the values that the Army has defined so that my superiors, peers, and subordinates will try to emulate me.

References

Merriam-Webster Online (2007). Retrieved on October 11, 2007, from <http://www.m-w.com/>