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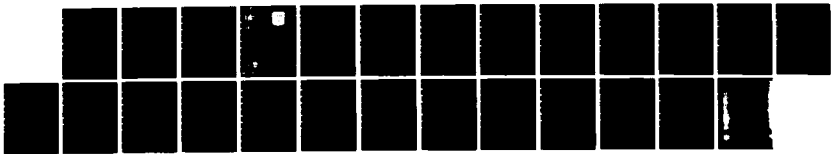
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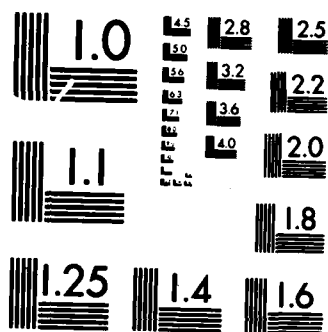
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STUDENT ESSAY

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FRATERNIZATION

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL STEPHEN L. GEMLICH
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

16 APRIL 1984



US ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM

FRATERNIZATION

INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

by

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16 April 1984

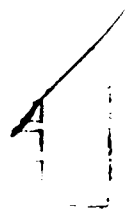
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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR(S): Stephen L. Gemlich, LTC, USAF
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→ This essay explores the Air Force problem of fraternization. In developing this essay it was necessary to look at the history and custom of the military concerning a ban on fraternization. Information was gathered using a literature search and personal interviews with staff officers assigned to Air Force Personnel staff, Department of the Air Force. Impacting on the ban against fraternization is the increasing number of women who have become members of the Air Force and the attitudinal changes of society. It is concluded that Air Force regulations foster an atmosphere of familiarity and fraternization. The problem crosses all ranks—senior officers to junior enlisted, supervisors and subordinates. The senior leaders in the Air Force need to take the lead in turning this problem around. The best method to achieve this objective is to embark on a wide ranging educational program aimed at resurrecting the social distance between officers and enlisted.



FRATERNIZATION

Discipline is then not the end, but a means to an end—the end that each man shall be imbued with a spirit of loyalty to leader and to organization, which will result in unity and promptness of action in instant response to the will of the leader.

A-1

Captain L. C. Andrews, USA¹

Military leaders have always believed that armed forces must be disciplined to be effective. That belief is not unique. It is at least as deeply ingrained in career enlisted personnel as it is career officers. For the purposes of this paper, the requirement for discipline will be assumed. Instead, consider a phase of military life which has historically been imposed in the name of discipline—the prohibition against fraternization between enlisted personnel and officers.

A discussion of fraternization ought to begin with a definition. For many years individuals knew what fraternization was. They could not provide a definition, but were able to describe situations which easily satisfy their own understanding of the term. You might say it was part of the Air Force customs. Customs include positive actions—things to do; and taboos—things to avoid doing. Customs tend to take the force of law, as indeed they are—the common law. In accordance with custom the officer strives to develop his organization to its maximum efficiency, while providing for his men an effective leadership, and impartial justice, a wise and fair attitude.² Those things which militate against this necessary result must be avoided. It is a psychological fact that undue familiarity breeds contempt.³ No officer could violate

this ancient custom with one or two men of his command and convince the others of his unswerving impartiality. Those officers and airmen who have endured together the grueling hardship of bitter campaigns or the ordeal of battle, can understand under these conditions there often develops a mutual trust and complete confidence between officer and airmen in which each is carried forward to acts of sacrifice, of courage, and leadership beyond themselves to the end that the one shall not be seen as wanting in the eyes of the other.⁴

Only recently have Air Force regulations specifically addressed fraternization. Air Force Regulation 30-1, dated 4 May 1983, says the following about professional relationships and fraternization:

Professional relationships are essential to the effective operation of the Air Force. In all supervisory situations there must be a true professional relationship supportive of the mission and operational effectiveness of the Air Force. There is a long standing and well recognized custom in the military service that officers shall not fraternize or associate with enlisted members under circumstances that prejudice the good order and discipline of the Armed Forces of the United States.

In the broader sense of superior-subordinate relationships there is a balance that recognizes the appropriateness of relationships. Social contact contributing to unit cohesiveness and effectiveness is encouraged. However, officers and NCOs must make sure their personal relationships with members, for whom they exercise a supervisory responsibility or whose duties or assignments they are in a position to influence, do not give the appearance of favoritism, preferential treatment, impropriety. Excessive socialization and undue familiarity, real or perceived, degrades leadership and interferes with command authority and mission effectiveness. It is very important that the conduct of every commander and supervisor, both on and off duty, reflects the appropriate professional relationship vital to mission accomplishment. It is equally important for all commanders and supervisors to recognize and enforce existing regulations and standards.

Air Force members of different grades are expected to maintain a professional relationship governed by the

essential elements of mutual respect, dignity, and military courtesy. Every officer, NCO, and airman must demonstrate the appropriate military bearing and conduct both on and off duty. Social and personal relationships between Air Force members are normally matters of individual judgment. They become matters of official concern when such relationships adversely affect duty performance, discipline, and morale. For example, if an officer consistently and frequently attends other than officially sponsored enlisted parties, or if a senior Air Force member dates and shows favoritism and preferential treatment to a junior member, it may create situations that negatively affect unit cohesiveness, that is, positions of authority may be weakened, peer group relationships may become jeopardized, job performance may decrease, and loss of unit morale and spirit may occur.⁵

A brief historical review may be helpful in understanding the inception of fraternization. The military social caste system is probably as old as the military itself. That which has been a part of the US armed forces probably has its roots in European custom, from which the early American military borrowed most of its traditions. By custom, an officer was a "gentleman," presumably of good family, who either inherited or could afford to buy his officer's commission. The enlisted personnel or "other ranks" were "the men," presumably from the lower classes. Gentlemen did not socialize with the lower classes. Custom, not law, dictated social activities and preserved the class distinctions.⁶

The American Revolution did not change the social order in the armed forces. Although established to defend our democratic institutions, the US military is not itself a democratic institution by either intent or design, as anyone who has ever served can attest. The class distinction between officers and enlisted personnel survived two world wars despite the large number of officers who came from the enlisted ranks, the

infusion into the enlisted ranks of men from the upper socio-economic levels, and the interjection of women into the officer and enlisted ranks.⁷

The subject of fraternization surfaced at Colonel Hobby's first press conference upon being sworn in as director of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WACC). She was asked by a reporter if WAAC officers would be permitted to date male privates. Being new to the military, Hobby deferred to a general to explain Army tradition on officer/enlisted association. He did his best but was not sure how it would apply to women.⁸ Subsequently, over Hobby's objections, the Army took a hard line: there would be no fraternization irrespective of the sex of the people involved. But nothing was officially published.⁹

Since the rule was not published in any official directive, enforcement was not uniform among the services or even within each service. At the local base level, male officers took a somewhat cavalier attitude toward male officers dating enlisted women, but not the reverse. Any female line officer who socialized with enlisted men was considered a traitor to her class; but, interestingly, a nurse was not. Moreover, the burden of complying with the rule was placed mainly on the woman in each case. If caught in the act of fraternizing, it was she who was disciplined, rarely the man.¹⁰

In general, female line officers strongly disapproved of any officer/enlisted fraternization. Women's Army Corps commanders were particularly sensitive to male officers dating enlisted women in their companies, believing that it was corrosive to unit discipline and morale, especially if the officer was of high rank--and he frequently was.¹¹

Where it was condoned, mixed dating in itself rarely caused problems except where officers dated subordinates or brought their enlisted dates

to officers' clubs where other officers felt uncomfortable about it or strongly disapproved. Enlisted men often bitterly resented enlisted women dating officers but also resented being told they could not date female officers. It was a no-win situation for them.¹²

The Navy Department took a somewhat different tack and, as it turned out, a more practical one. Publicly, they took the position that officers and enlisted personnel of the opposite sex might attend social functions together so long as they "conduct themselves in accordance with the general rules of conduct applicable to ladies and gentlemen," whatever that was supposed to mean. Thus, the Navy avoided the public relations problems of the Army. However, there was little doubt in the minds of most Navy women after their initial training that mixed dating was off limits.¹³

With the integration of women into the regular force in 1948, the subject surfaced again as a public relations problem having a negative effect on the recruitment of enlisted women. As in the war, enforcement varied among and within the services. It was generally conceded that a joint policy of some kind was needed at least to settle some of the confusion, but nothing was done. The issue was a public relations hot potato no one wanted to touch. Meanwhile, men and women continued to do what came naturally. By then, civilian clothes were worn off duty, so mixed couples were less obvious. If they married, however, they were headed for all kinds of problems. They could not occupy government housing because enlisted personnel could not live in officers' quarters and vice versa. Socially, they were outcasts because the officers' club was off limits to enlisted personnel, and officers were not always welcome at enlisted social activities. Neither spouse was entitled to the status of a dependent for any family entitlement.¹⁴

A US Army captain, a graduate of West Point with a promising career ahead, was forced to resign in 1978 because he had married an enlisted woman, and the Army could not cope with it. In a valiant effort to clarify and justify its position, the Army subsequently announced its policy:

Relationships between service members of different rank which involve, or give the appearance of, partial preferential treatment or the improper use of rank or position for personal gain, are prejudicial to good order, discipline, and high unit morale. Such relationships will be avoided if relationship between service members of different rank cause actual or perceived partiality or unfairness, involve the improper use of rank or position for personal gain or can otherwise reasonably be expected to undermine discipline, authority or morale. Commanders and supervisors will counsel those involved or take action as appropriate.¹⁵

In view of the foregoing you see that it is easier to describe fraternization than to define it. The only Air Force regulation reference to fraternization is in AFR 30-1. We can say that under custom and this regulation, officers may not associate with enlisted personnel on a basis of military equality. Nor may they associate in a manner which adversely affects or prejudices good order or military discipline. Some forms of social contact are recognized as advancing cohesion and esprit and are therefore permissible such as organization picnics, Christmas parties, and weddings.

In recent years fraternization has received an increasing amount of special interest. The US Army Inspector General has listed fraternization as a special interest item for 1984. This increasing trend began around 1978 when there were fundamental changes in the attitudes and composition of the military populace. The most obvious change in the composition is the increase in women on active duty. Women now comprise

11% (65,000) of the Air Force 600,000 population and will remain between 11-12% through 1987.¹⁶ Sexual attraction being what it always has been (and undoubtedly always will be), those figures must portend a significant increase in fraternization. As of 28 February 1984, there were 734 marriages between female officers and male airmen and 536 marriages between male officers and female airmen.¹⁷ (Presumably, these marriages were preceded by a goodly bit of fraternizing. It is difficult to envision a sir-sergeant level surviving more than the first five seconds of a courtship.) Nature and numbers will also undoubtedly increase officer-enlisted socializing short of marriage. That is not to suggest that fraternization occurs only as a function of sexual attraction. Because of the attitudinal changes, fraternization between officers and airmen of the same gender will also increase.

Not, surprisingly, most problems associated with more women in the military do not originate with one sex or the other but come from the relationship between the two. Males are distressed by feelings that females are not physically prepared to handle masculine jobs, and they are "getting over" by offering sexual favors to escape from demanding tasks. Female soldiers frequently complain about other female soldiers exploiting their sex to win undeserved promotions or desirable jobs. Although all the blame shouldn't be put on women, because some men are either inept at managing women or treat them gently in order to win sexual favors.¹⁸

The problem of increasing numbers of women in the military is not limited just to the Air Force. All the other services are experiencing similar problems. For example, the Army court-martialed Staff Sergeant Daryl Stewart when he kissed and had sexual intercourse with a recruit he was engaged to marry. Sergeant Stewart was busted one rank and fined

\$500. His fiancée, Private Cheryl Barnard, received thirty days restriction to base, thirty days extra duty, and a \$150 fine. She complained she was a "scapegoat for everybody."¹⁹ "A lot of girls from both platoons are fooling around with drill sergeants and trainees, and they are laughing behind my back because since all the attention is on me, they are getting away with all kinds of things." As more women join what used to be called "this man's Army," more and more sex fraternization between men and women of different ranks is occurring. The Army wants it stopped.²⁰

Women in the Army total about 74,000. That is up from 12,400 in 1972 when the Army launched a concerted effort to recruit women. Total Army strength is about 780,000.²¹

Some sergeants have been convicted for nothing more serious than dancing, kissing, and hugging. Their sentences sometimes compare with those of two drill sergeants convicted in December 1978 in connection with the previous June 29 heat stroke deaths of two first-day recruits who died after strenuous exercise. In that case, Sergeant Laurence Chapman, Jr. was demoted one rank and fined \$500; Sergeant Willie Alexander was sentenced to six months in prison, loss of two-thirds pay for six months, and reduced to private.²² There were at least six court-martials of Fort Jackson soldiers for fraternization during 1977-78. Drill Sergeant Richard Getty was sentenced to a month in prison and a bad conduct discharge for having sexual relations with recruits. Sergeant Max Howerter was convicted of two counts of kissing and hugging a female trainee and letting her sit on his lap in front of other recruits at a bar. Howerter, a highly decorated eighteen-year veteran, was reprimanded and fined \$1,200. He said he had been engaged to the woman for more than six months. In one administrative case, a Fort Jackson board

fined Sergeant Rodney Congdon half a month's pay in 1976 for "dancing and socializing" with a trainee. In other administrative action, a staff sergeant was demoted in February 1979 for charges including marrying a trainee.²³

First Lieutenant Alford Veal, Jr. was administered Article 15 punishment in 1982 for having a sexual relationship with an enlisted woman.²⁴ Lieutenant Veal was slated to leave the Army 1 February 1984 following a decision by a field board of inquiry. The field board of inquiry decided to eliminate Lieutenant Veal from the service with a general discharge under honorable conditions, partly for personal conduct "unbecoming an officer." His case is under review by the Army Counsel Review Board, Department of the Army.²⁵

The US Coast Guard had a case of fraternization aboard the Cutter Rush. This case was between a female Lt.,j.g., Christine A. Balboni, and a male Chief Warrant Officer, Charles C. Van Meter. While Lieutenant Balboni and Chief Van Meter say they had a platonic relationship during their tour aboard the Rush, the Coast Guard argues they were lovers.²⁶ The case is still under review.

Recently the Navy court-martialed Commander Gerald Michael Vanderwier, a highly decorated 19-year veteran, for engaging in homosexual relations with a member of his own crew.²⁷ In the words of the prosecutor Commander H. Troy Nicks who said,

The real problem is fraternization between officers and enlisted personnel, which is barred between heterosexuals as well. The commander's association with an enlisted man violated the time honored rule designed to promote cohesiveness aboard ship and eliminate even the appearance of favoritism.²⁸

The scope of this case extends beyond mere fraternization. It reflects on the honor and esteem of the US military service officer corps. As Commander Nicks said,

This man has dragged the honor and the esteem of the US Navy Officer Corps through the mud. He has cheapened the position of all who must lead in the position of officers and he has made it more difficult for subordinates who must look to officers with respect and obedience.²⁹

I will have more to say later about the impact of this case and its effect on officership and professionalism.

Finally, there is the case of US Air Force Captain Michael A. Johanns, 29, a missile officer assigned at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota. Johanns was convicted by general court martial in July 1982 of fraternizing with three different enlisted women assigned to the air base.³⁰ The fraternization charges against Johanns were unusual since the case did not involve the type of "aberrant conduct" seen in previous fraternization cases, such as homosexuality, rape, indecent acts or evidence of a superior seeking special favor. Johanns' case can best be described as "voluntary, private, non-deviate sexual activity between of age officer and enlisted members who were not associated with one another in any way on duty."³¹ However, the Air Force court decided that Johanns' acts represented private matters and that the government believes officers should be held to higher standards than enlisted members. An officer "holds a special position of public trust and honor."³² Furthermore, Johanns' actions were described as indiscriminate bed hopping and his behavior was not just in poor taste or unsuitable, it was morally unbecoming and unworthy. It was dishonorable and disagreeable to him and to the military profession. By picking up the enlisted women at the NCO Club in front of other people in the command,

Johanns kept the relationships from being private and suffered a loss of respect from those who knew of his behavior.³³

It is not an uncommon practice for men and women who are dating, with or without marriage in sight, to engage in sexual relations in contemporary society; such a practice is not considered immoral or unusual. This case is still under review by the court of Military Appeals. Johanns appealed his conviction claiming, under other things, that the fraternization rules of the Air Force were vague and violated his freedom to associate with whomever he chose. ³⁴

The foregoing examples are attitudinal changes derived from societal changes. For twenty years, American society has dramatically expanded the freedom of the individual and curtailed the authority of institutions. Officers who have been reared and educated in that ideology may not readily accept the necessity or the validity of distinctions based on rank. Much of modern political and sociological dogma is diametrically opposed to such military customs as saluting and "sirring." The military rationale for the ban on fraternizing--maintenance of discipline rather than to uphold social privilege--would be viewed as hypocrisy. Modern American cultural values possessed by many of our younger officers as they enter active duty constitute a major growing challenge to the traditional military regimen, including the ban on fraternization.

A disparity of attitudes toward fraternization exists today among Air Force officers. Many are concerned about officers under their supervision fraternizing with airmen. Others are against it, but believe they can do nothing about it. Still others are adamantly opposed to fraternization, believe they can do nothing about it legally, but make their opposition known to their officers anyway. This gives

rise to the undesirable situation in which different standards of conduct are enforced in different units. That should not be.

Other changes also militate against the traditional officer-enlisted relationship. The educational and financial differences which formerly separated officers and enlisted personnel after duty hours have been substantially narrowed. They live in the same residential areas, attend the same evening college courses, patronize the same restaurants and places of entertainment, and so on. The Air Force itself contributes to the departure from the traditional relationship. AFR 90-1, Assignment of Family Housing, provides that if an officer is married to an airman, they may choose either officer or enlisted quarters for occupancy.³⁵ By this regulation, the Air Force has formally announced that it countenances the most complete and intimate form of fraternization possible. Moreover, the regulation fosters a second form of fraternization. That is, a considerable amount of socializing occurs in any neighborhood on a continuing and regular basis. The Air Force cannot reasonably expect that neighbors (the officer spouse in an enlisted neighborhood and vice versa) will abstain from the normal first name associations. If these associations occurred under other circumstances, they would be fraternization.

To avoid these situations an officer-enlisted married couple should be required to live off base. This would require a change in AFR 90-1 housing assignment policy. Then the Air Force would formally denounce officer-enlisted marriages.

Air Force Regulation 215-11, Operation of Open Messes, authorizes airmen to attend an Officers' Club as an officer's guest.³⁶ The reverse is also true. That regulation is being interpreted as authorizing

officers to bring their enlisted dates into Officers' Clubs. This regulation condones fraternization. Yet, the Air Force resists consolidating officer and enlisted clubs because the threat to discipline from social mixing is too great.

A commander's enforcement under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) of the custom of fraternization is very doubtful. Action under UCMJ would be more similar to disrespect, conduct unbecoming an officer, and conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline.

The implementation of the "All Volunteer Force" created a serious impact on the military forces. Specifically, the services had not planned for the great number of women who would volunteer for military service. The services were experiencing shortages in numerous skill specialties. The American women have always responded when they were needed and certainly women could help. Many jobs in the military can be done as well by women as by men. According to Representative Patricia Schroeder about 76 percent of the Air Force jobs can be performed by women.³⁷

As of 31 December 1982 there were over 192,000 women in uniform in all the military services.³⁸ Without these women the services would be facing a severe shortage, again, in many skill specialties. Likewise, there would be a definite degradation in the quality of the force. Women who enlist do better than men on mental aptitude tests and are more likely to have a high school diploma. Research shows that disciplinary problems are fewest among service personnel with the most education.³⁹

The inclusion of women in the military service created social stresses for both sexes. Most of the men were anything but happy to have women in their midst. "Women create too many problems for me," one

supervisor said.⁴⁰ As recently as last year, a senior NCO in the Aircraft Maintenance Squadron which I commanded, complained that too many women ride sick call for female complaints and that they couldn't do their jobs.

Fraternization had not been a burning issue until the military services began increasing the number of women in uniform. Now because of these young women, fraternization and sexual harassment loom as a serious problem to order and discipline in the ranks. The tradition of order and discipline may well be what causes the apparent difference; the young reject it, the old accept it. Familiarity, under whatever guise, cannot be tolerated in an organization that requires adherence to rules.

As I said earlier in this paper, fraternization between officers and enlisted seriously affect officership and professionalism among the officer corps. Cases such as the one involving Commander Vanderwier draws undue attention to the military service in general, and the officer corps in particular from the critical scrutiny of the public. Each officer must possess certain professional and moral qualities as a measure of good leadership. Some of these qualities are as follows:

Integrity. No other single quality is more vital to the strength of the officer corps for upon it is built national confidence, social security, and most important, personal satisfaction. The absence of integrity in any realm of the individual's activity beshadows him and his associates.

Loyalty. The entire military organization is predicated upon the individual's loyalty to superiors and subordinates. When loyalty is not complete, disintegration results. True loyalty must work both ways.

Discipline. Discipline, the habitual attention to detail, must be engrained so deeply that appropriate reaction results in all fields.

Responsibility. Each officer should never forget that rank has its responsibility.

Set the Example. The most important quality of a successful leader is setting the example—for subordinates, peers and superiors. I can't over-emphasize the importance of this characteristic. The commander or supervisor—whomever is the number one individual in an organization—sets the tone for that organization. Every member of that organization looks to that person and reacts to their example. They look at the way they wear the uniform, their personal grooming standards, the language they use, their personal standards of ethics and integrity, and their interpersonal relationships. Strong negative actions can destroy a leader's ability and following. Not only will subordinates be watching but peers and superiors, likewise will be watching. You should be watching others as well. Do not tolerate any substandard conduct from other officers. For the officer corps to be called professional, we must police our profession. That's the only way of keeping high standards, especially high standards of ethics, morality, and integrity. So often a few bad officers tarnish the image of the majority of our superb officers. We must continue to weed out those individuals—enlisted members as well as officers.

If a truly professional officer conducts him/herself within these guidelines of professionalism, they should never be involved in fraternization. Likewise, the honor and esteem of the officer corps would never be subjected to degradation, disrespect, and tarnishment by those who fail to measure up as professionals. Not only is the officer corps under scrutiny but the NCO ranks as well. Numerous NCOs have become involved in fraternization cases. These NCOs severely tarnish the image of the total NCO corps.

I think fraternization is further encouraged by excessive socializing between supervisors/subordinates. This socializing is done in the name of unit cohesiveness. Throughout leadership training seminars and field training exercises, the central theme is unit cohesiveness and

teamwork. It seems in order to achieve this end the supervisors feel it's necessary to know a great deal about their subordinates. But it's socializing like "The Boss' Night Out," sponsored by a supervisor's subordinates which lead to the use of first names and a general degradation of discipline, increase in fraternization and ultimately a decline in mission performance.

On-the-job relationships also encourage fraternization. In these relationships we have become so concerned with human relations and developing an atmosphere of congeniality and informal working conditions that we have lost sight of the fact that we are part of a military organization. Familiarity breeds contempt. The common use of first names on the job is the ideal condition for fraternization.

All of these fraternization problems have an affect on discipline and, most importantly, mission accomplishment. The senior Air Force leadership must meet these fraternization problems head-on and reverse this growing trend. How do we correct this problem? Is it an officer problem? An NCO problem? Or, does it cross all ranks?

In the foregoing examples of fraternization I must conclude that the fraternization problem crosses all ranks. Therefore, to correct the problems the senior leadership must embark on a wide range of educational initiatives. These educational efforts are aimed at resurrecting the social distance between officer and airmen by fostering an understanding and willingness to comply by all to these efforts. The Air Force must teach new members that this officer/enlisted, supervisor/subordinate relationship is inherent in being in the military. From enlisted basic training a clearly taught lesson in the responsibilities of a superior/subordinate could reduce this problem. Clear policy

statements in the in-processing stage of newly assigned personnel might also help to resolve this problem. Likewise, the Air Force officer training schools—USAF Academy, Reserve Officer Training Corps programs, and Officer Training School—should have clearly designed instructions in social dos and don'ts of an officer. On a continuing basis, our officer professional military education schools—Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College, and Air War College—need to reinforce this education program. On the enlisted side of the ledger there needs to be the same educational programs. I've already mentioned basic training; however, further emphasis is required in NCO professional military education such as NCO Leadership School, NCO Academy, and Senior NCO Academy. This education program would also require some special guidance for commanders who would have to enforce the standards.

The underlying objective of these educational initiatives is two fold: maintaining discipline and accomplishing the mission. Each is dependent on the other; without discipline you cannot have mission accomplishment. In today's Air Force with the attitudes of the new officers and enlisted, there is an extremely high probability that fraternization will jeopardize both of these objectives. Our senior leaders must recognize the potentially dangerous situation developing and take positive steps to reverse this trend toward increasing familiarity among officers/enlisted, supervisor/subordinate.

ENDNOTES

1. Jacob M. Braude, Speaker's Encyclopedia of Stories, Quotations, and Anecdotes, p. 226.
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5. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Regulation 30-1, pp. 19-20.
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7. Ibid.
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11. Ibid.
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17. Thomas, Captain, AF/MPC, USAF, Telephone conversation, 15 March 1984.
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19. Bob Drogin, "Adam and Eve and the Army," The Progressive, March 1979, p. 30.
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