

Running Head: RESPECT, FRIENDSHIP, AND HONOR

Respect, Friendship, and Honor an Example in the Year of the NCO

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Abstract

The year 2009 was designated as the year of the Noncommissioned Officer. Many great events occurred throughout the year for the United States Army. Successful combat operations in Iraq have led to greater stability and security for the established Government of Iraq and its people. Persistent defiance from the Taliban reignited conflict and instability for the country of Afghanistan. Within the U.S. Army there have been many significant decisions towards equipping, training, and caring for the force. Amongst all these events throughout the year there are our regularly scheduled events and traditions. Promotions are always a special event and during this year of the NCO, I had the great honor and privilege to attend and promote a good friend and a great Officer in a ceremony at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

I started the year of 2009 like I have the last other three, deployed. The frequency of deployments has been regular that I get somewhat immune to the whole idea of being away. I consider it a great honor to get the chance to serve overseas in our Army. Knowing and serving with some of the Commanders and NCO that have continued to routinely deploy to fight and win in our Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) makes it worthwhile knowing we are successful and making a difference.

Upon returning I reacquainted myself with my family and work and the year seemed to move quickly. During my time back from deployment I received an email from a good friend by the name of Doug Rose. Doug and I were classmates in Pathfinder school back in 2004. We have stayed in contact off and on through the years mostly just seeing how things were going with family. Both of us have had very busy careers post 9-11 and we have managed to meet face to face on only one occasion since graduating Pathfinder school.

Doug is an Army Officer in the Engineer Corps and since I am a combat engineer we had much in common with our experiences in the Army. During Pathfinder school Doug and I worked mostly as a team coaching each other through the required training and taking the time to organize study groups for several others to share experience in the subjects to help better understand what was being taught. I gained a lot of respect for Doug throughout the school since he was older than most of the NCOs in attendance at the rank of E5 and E6. Doug continued to show that he wanted to continue his knowledge of warrior skills by attending the course even as a Major. The instructors made note on one occasion that most O4s wouldn't want to go through this course since it was not anything required to further their career paths.

Doug always had a way to lighten the mood for the class and the instructors. As we progressed to the stage in training where we were going to conduct static line parachute jumps he told me and several others that he had not jumped in twenty years. For me being current on jump status and a Jumpmaster these jumps for the course were going to be a relief from what was experienced in the past when I was a Platoon Sergeant in the 82nd Airborne Division but I had all the respect in the world for Doug as he did not show an ounce of uncertainty as he exited that aircraft, successfully landed, and led his required patrol.

After that course we were all relieved to be heading home proud of our accomplishment and making few more friends. The years seemed to fly by and Doug contacted me in August 2009 about his upcoming promotion to Colonel. Doug had forwarded me the invitation and I referenced my schedule to make sure I did not have any locked in engagements. I replied letting him know that I would attend and he then told me that he wanted me to pin one of his Eagles on during the ceremony. Doug has always had a sense of humor about him so I called him and told him that “NCOs don’t promote officers”. Doug told me that he had put a lot of thought in his decision and he was serious about his offer for the ceremony. When I asked him about his thought process he said that it was the NCOs that he has served with that have made him a successful Officer and that the year of 2009 was designated as the year of the NCO and he wanted me to be a key participant in his promotion.

I was honored and humbled by his offer and thought of how I have often said that it was the many great Officers and Commanders that I have served with that had the confidence and trust in me and my abilities as a NCO that have allowed me to succeed.

Doug was currently assigned to the Pentagon in Washington D.C. with Joint Staff. The morning of the day of promotion I met Doug in front of the entrance he designated at the Pentagon. Since I had never been there before Doug escorted me to his office area and along the way I was amazed at the energy in the building coming from the people aggressively moving along the hallways, in discussion, and just focused on what they were doing.

Doug introduced me to his Commander and other co-workers. I knew the Commander very well I served with him in the past and was overwhelmed with the amount of others that I knew of or worked with in the past. I attended the scheduled staff update and again I could see the energy from everyone in attendance with the urgency to break out and start working. At this point I felt a little like I was a bit of a distraction. Since the Pentagon is primarily staffed with Officers there are only a small amount of NCOs, typically service and support so it was unusual to have an Army Sergeant Major walking around. After getting a quick tour of the Joint Staff area I headed to the auditorium where the promotion was to be held.

Minutes before the ceremony the seats filled with many invited friends, family, and service members. The ceremony began and the promotion orders were read, soon select personnel were called forward one at a time to pin the Eagles on Doug's uniform. I was proud to be called up and pin the rank of Colonel on his shoulder. The few of us selected were given an opportunity to speak some words about Doug and how he has impacted our lives and careers. Later Doug followed up with his words and thanks to all of us. He mentioned me in his speech with some reference to times in Pathfinder school and as an example of the NCOs that helped make him a better person and Officer. I am humbled to this day for those kind words and the opportunity to represent all of those great NCOs that were an influential part of Doug's career.

As the year comes to an end there have been numerous challenges placed on our Army as we continue to fight in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as show a global presence in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. The words spoken to a point by Brigadier General Miller that afternoon mentioned with all that is going on it is still important to take the time to honor great Soldiers and our traditions. After the ceremony concluded I found Doug in the mass of friends and family and it felt good to tell him as a friend and NCO, “congratulations Colonel”.

COL. Doug Rose provided me that great opportunity and experience on his day to have me there not only as a friend but a representative of the NCOs past and present to be part of a time honored tradition and make a statement on this year of the Noncommissioned Officer.