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CONTRIBUTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL NCOs to MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT OR BATTELFIELD SUCCESS

Throughout history many people have elected to serve in the Armed Services of this nation. Most of us can name Officers that have served and are remembered for their major accomplishments. Most of them we recognize from their wartime service. Not all of them were directly involved in combat. Who has not heard of Dwight D Eisenhower? Most of us remember him for leading our military during WWII. During this time, his position was not one where he was actively engaged in combat himself. He is recognized as a great leader, strategist and planner. We can easily name other great leaders. Names like George Washington, Andrew Jackson, Sam Houston, Teddy Roosevelt, Ulysses S. Grant, George Patton, Omar Bradley, and Douglas MacArthur. Not all of our heroes come from times of war.

I read that Stephen Ambrose claimed that the Lewis and Clark expedition was one of the greatest military expeditions ever undertaken. It was known as the Corps of Discovery. But who were their Sergeants? After conducting several musters to select men for their journey Charles Floyd and Nathaniel Pryor were named as Sergeants. Sergeant Floyd was the first United States Soldier to die west of the Mississippi River. He was also the only one to die during the entire expedition. All indications are that he died of a medical condition. Captains Lewis and Clark were often away from the main group of men mapping and gathering samples. They made it known that while they were away, the Sergeants were in charge and all of their orders were to be followed. They

paddled and walked from St Louis to the Pacific Coast and back, losing only one soldier.

This could not have been accomplished without the Sergeants doing their job.

The expedition started with 33 members and lasted for 2 Years and 4 months. I will not go into analyzing these NCO or their individual stories but mention them here as examples of NCOs performing in a peacetime environment.

We can name other NCOs of historical note. Sergeants York and Murphy easily come to mind. You can easily find literature on their war time exploits. Let's examine a few other NCOs and their contributions. Names and stories that I hope will inspire you.

William Brown was a soldier in the Continental Army. After a brief stint in the military as a corporal he re-enlisted as a private on 9 April 1777 for the duration of the war. He was promoted to Corporal on 8 May 1777 and to Sergeant on 1 August 1780. During the siege of Yorktown Sergeant Brown participated in the charge and capture of redoubt number 10. The capture of this enemy position ultimately led to the surrender of the British Forces in Yorktown. For his significant actions he was personally awarded the Badge of Military Merit by General Washington. He was one, of only a few, Soldiers to receive the badge from General Washington. The badge, designed by General Washington, was intended as a military order for soldiers who displayed unusual gallantry in battle, or extraordinary fidelity and essential service. What is unusual about this story is that, it was common practice to honor only high-ranking officers rather than common soldiers. General Washington said "The Road To Glory In A Patriot Army And A Free Country Is Open To All".

George Jordan was born in rural Tennessee. He was born a slave. He enlisted at the age of 19 and served as an Infantry man in the 38th Infantry. After getting out of the military he enlisted for a second time in January 1870 as corporal in the 9th Cavalry. George Jordan served in the western frontier as a buffalo soldier. On 13 May 1880, he received information that a settlement was under imminent attack from an Apache warrior named Victorio. He marched his detachment through the night and took up a defensive perimeter around the settlement. His detachment of 25 men repulsed a force of more than 100 Indians. His men were so well trained and prepared for battle that not a single casualty was incurred. For his actions SGT Jordan was immediately recommended for the Medal of Honor. He did not receive the medal until May 1890. He remained in the Army and reached the rank of First Sergeant. 1SG Jordan died in 1904.

Leigh Ann Hester was the first woman to receive the Silver Star for valor in combat since WWII. She joined the Kentucky National Guard's 617th Military Police Company in 2001. On 20 March 2005 SGT Hester's squad was ambushed by anti-Iraqi forces. She led her team through the ambush kill zone and into a flanking position. Her team engaged an enemy trench line with M203 rounds and grenades. She then cleared two additional trenches with her squad leader eliminating several enemy combatants with her M4 rifle. When the fight was over 27 insurgents were dead, six were wounded and one was captured. Six of her squad members were also cited with awards. She said she didn't have time to be scared. She was quoted as saying "Your Training Kicks In And The Soldier Kicks In. It's Your Life Or Theirs. You've Got A Job To Do Protecting

Yourself And Your Fellow Comrades.” My research tells me that she is the only female NCO to receive this award.

I would like to point out that I have given you only three examples of outstanding NCOs. There are many more. The dates of their service to this country range from the Revolutionary War to the present. They differ in gender and came from very different ethnic and social backgrounds. The tactics of war have changed with the evolution of weapons. In Sergeant Brown’s case the tactics were mostly shoulder to shoulder bayonet assaults brought to the Continental Army courtesy of Gen Von Steuben. He is credited with teaching the essential drill and discipline to Army. Through constant drilling the bayonet charge became a standard of war. During the Indian Wars, Soldiers were trained by veterans of the Civil War. SGT Jordan’s defensive position took advantage of terrain and carbine rifles to succeed. SGT Hester was trained in a peacetime Army. Her Drill Sergeants in basic training most likely were not combat veterans. A good portion of her training was taught by reserve components. The advantage of automatic weapons supported the practice of movement and suppressive fire tactics by separate elements to accomplish their objective.

I chose these three to point out that anyone can be a good NCO and leader. Regardless of the era in which you serve. Ask yourself what they had in common. Every one of them was a volunteer. They volunteered to serve in the military during times of war. This speaks to their loyalty and patriotism. The first two NCOs had previously left the service but re-enlisted. From that, we can assume that they originally left the service

on good terms as evidenced by their re-enlisting. If we take care of our soldiers they will re-enlist. We must retain our good Soldiers and reward them accordingly. All of the Soldiers I mention here were rewarded for their accomplishments. They would not be remembered by history otherwise. Our Soldiers are our most important resource. We must take care of our resources. That does not mean that we are over protective. Don't be afraid to use your soldiers. Challenge them and they will respond and learn. All three of the soldiers I mention here were highly motivated. They are recognized as being self starters. No one had to tell them how to act or react. They were prepared for their mission and were willing to carry it out. They were successful in their mission because their leaders had trained them properly. In turn, they had trained the soldiers under them to be successful. We must train our Soldiers if we are to accomplish our mission. They were all chosen to be NCOs because they possessed the traits of a leader. All three of the led from the front.

In Closing I would like to point out that the men and women that are presently serving during this Global War on Terrorism are all volunteers. They are modern patriots. They are making great sacrifices to serve this Nation. As NCOs, we owe it to our Soldiers, to make sure they are prepared to succeed in their mission. We must train them and challenge them and retrain them if necessary. We should reward them as they succeed in their missions. Our Junior NCOs are our future leaders. Our Junior Soldiers are our future Junior NCOs. They will be the ones that will replace us and carry on the legacy of the NCO Corps. Don't be afraid to lead from the front. Be the example for what is right.

In summary, Good NCOs take pride in their work. We take care of our soldiers. We make sure that we are trained and up to accepting challenges. We make sure that our soldiers under us are trained to complete the task they are assigned. We always lead from the front.

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