
FLPP flop

I recently received an e-mail message informing me that my Foreign Language Proficiency Pay would soon be terminated. It seems that my second language has been dropped from the list of needed languages. This disturbed me because, although I am not in an MOS that requires a language identifier, I use my language on a regular basis for the Army.

My secondary language is German and I am stationed in Germany. I am the only military person in my section and I work with eight civilians, two of whom are local-national employees. Whether on guard duty, in the office or dealing with local contractors, I am constantly using my German skills. I feel that my FLPP was pay that I was EARNING.

Maybe something should be done so soldiers with a second language receive FLPP when they are stationed in a country that uses that language.

*Ssg Brett A Beliveau,
5th Signal Command*

It was a lozenge

In the Spring 2002 issue of *NCO Journal* letters to the editor section, CSM Kemp Freund noted that the *pierced lozenge* in the first sergeant rank insignia is correct at this time.

However, in Change 3, AR 600-35, dated 22 September 1942, the device was referred to as a *hollow lozenge*.

*1SG Daniel T. Arnold
HHC 1092nd ECB(C)
Parkersburg, W. Va.*

Benefit packages produce component disharmony

The magazine theme of "One Army: Integrating the Components" (Spring '02 *NCO Journal*) was an excellent choice. Integration of the Army

Letters

components is indeed an important goal in order to increase the cohesiveness and effectiveness of our military forces. One of the hidden (or at least consistently overlooked) obstacles to such integration is the disharmonization between benefits packages of part-time versus full-time soldiers (the most obvious being retirement differences).

In the last 10 years Guardsmen/Reservists have been called on to shoulder a much larger share of the defense burden without any coinciding changes in their benefits. This dramatically increasing burden is also felt by the Guardsmen/Reservists employers and families. Our best and brightest mid-career NCOs often are forced to make hard decisions trying to balance these conflicting demands. An OPTEMPO increase of 1,200 percent (according to NCOA) is quite a daunting challenge.

It is time for the Department of Defense to finally make public comments on the bills before Congress (as both the Senate and House Armed Services Committees have requested) and to support efforts to bring fairness and balance to the Guard/Reserve compensation package.

The Department of Defense has remained publicly silent on the subject this entire year. It is time for the DoD to demonstrate a true **tangible** commitment to real force integration. Our mid-level Guard/Reserve NCOs must be shown that "One Army" is not just an empty slogan. It's time for the DoD and the NCO Corps to support true parity now. The **morale** and long-term **retention** of our most trained, qualified and experienced leaders within the Guard/Reserve depends on such a commitment.

If NCOs are the backbone of the

Army, how bad do we want to maintain a strong backbone in the Guard/Reserve? It's time for the Guard/Reserves to be fairly treated as the partners they are and will continue to be. Increased integration can come through increased parity.

*MSG David McHenry
USAR, Overland Mo.*

High expectations, high returns

Bottom line up front: I expected much from my attendance at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy. However, I express in the following words what will lead to a proper answer to this familiar concept.

Anticipation and high anxiety mark each centralized promotion board, annually. The same as with the sergeants major board. On that board, there are some positive outcomes, some negative ones and combinations thereof. One possibility is to be selected as an alternate — a student in residence at USASMA, the Army's premiere NCO Education System school for approximately 10 months if someone else can show up.

As an alternate who attended Class 52, I was both elated and honored. Why? It is a testament to all that I have done and achieved these 18 years of soldierly challenges, both as a leader and being led, in peace and war.

These last two years, I had no name to many. I was either *Top* or *First Sergeant*. I was the keeper of the keys, not to just the barracks, but speaking allegorically, the keys of enlightenment — as in training, social service agencies, schools, UCMJ, promotions, fund raisers, family and unit support group, leaves and passes, etc. Although I was not the approval authority but recommender of what should happen on many of these issues, I was the portal of them

all, expected to *walk the walk* not just *talk the talk*. In speaking humbly, I would like to think I did just that and did in fact touch soldiers and inspire them to be all they can be. There is no NCO position that could top this but one – sergeant major. No better way to leave the first sergeant seat than to be selected as a USASMA alternate. (To have a sequence number is a thrill that goes without saying).

So, what did I expect from my attendance at USASMA?

My answer is -- network with my peers, concentrate on or complete a college degree, prepare for a sergeant major's position, be promoted, to name a few. My answer to this question became complete upon graduation of this prestigious NCO course. My true answer was the culmination of all the experiences that happened to me during my attendance at *the Academy* in Class 52.

As the course progressed, I expected mentorship from my faculty advisors, and on occasion I did receive that. The experiences of my resource management faculty advisor often caused reflection on what my role as a sergeant major would be. I did complete college (a master's degree), networked (the art of playing Caribbean-style dominoes) and was selected for promotion/appointment to CSM.

*MSG (P) Randolph B. Muhammad,
Graduate, Class 52*

Day of days

Who will ever forget what they were doing on Sept. 11, 2001? The memories of the way we were that day, the fear, the panic: they remain forever etched into the minds of all of us, like a brand upon our very beings.

I am no different. I have a story, and tales to tell my grandchildren when they ask me, "Where were you?" just

like I asked my grandparents about where they were when JFK was assassinated. My story is nothing special to most, especially those who were at Ground Zero or our brothers and sisters in arms at the Pentagon, but something else happened that day, Sept. 11, and I will never forget that either.

I graduated from PLDC Sept. 6, 2001. After 30 days of lockdown, drill and ceremony, land navigation, more drill and ceremony, bad chow, a worse bunk, and yes, more drill and ceremony, I stood on the 101st Airborne Division Parade Field with almost 200 other soldiers and said the NCO Creed one more time. Then we were dismissed.

My DA Form 1059 and a four-day pass in hand, I was about to hit the road for a little rest and catch-up time with my wife. But right before I left, one of my NCOs handed me a set of chevrons and smiled. They didn't have my promotion orders finished yet, but they would be in the first day I was back at work: the next Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001.

I left the parade field more excited than I can recall, finally realizing the first major goal in my Army career. After a few days at home, I was antsy, full of anticipation about being promoted. The other three ranks I had worn just seemed to pale in comparison to the three stripes, the hallmark symbol of an NCO. Is there anything else that physically embodies what it is to be an NCO than seeing those three hard stripes on someone's collar? Well, not to me.

Checking back into the company the day before (Sept. 10), I was told that I could be promoted as soon as I wanted to, even at PT the next day. In my freshman enthusiasm I hastily agreed, not wanting to wait a minute longer. The next day dawned crisp and clear, and I arrived to our PT formation, standing to the side, waiting to be posted. The call came soon

enough, and the next thing I knew, one of my mentors and my company commander were pinning the chevrons on my collar, and tossing my specialist shield aside. I was a SERGEANT.

The next few hours were a blur of congratulations and joking, and yes, a little rank pounding from the senior NCOs. I felt like I was finally there, that I had arrived at some station in my Army journey. And then, three hours after being promoted, one of our soldiers burst into the company speaking of something strange happening in New York, a plane crashing somewhere, maybe the World Trade Center.

In response to the attacks, we immediately went to a heightened level of security, like everyone else in the Army. My status as a sergeant with exactly eight hours time-in-grade put me at the top of the duty roster; my first night as an NCO I was pulling the first of many sergeant-of-the-guard shifts in our company area. I spent the night with my guards, searching for news on the chaos in our country, and getting used to answering the phone, *Sergeant Krause*.

A year has passed since that day, and our country is somehow growing used to our new reality. Our Army is growing used to a new war, and I am finally growing used to being called sergeant. But none of us will ever forget what happened to America last fall and where we were when the news came.

And I don't think I will ever get used to answering the question, *When were you promoted?*

September 11, 2001, I reply.

I wait for the person to inevitably respond, *Really? Man, you'll never forget that day.*"

No, I don't think I will.

*SGT Michael Krause II
101st Corps Support Group*