

SERGEANT MAJOR'S CORNER

With staff NCO ranks come responsibilities

Sgt. Maj. Robert W. Holub

MarForPac Sergeant Major

This letter is intended for all staff sergeant selectees.

I hope you will forgive me for not writing to each and every one of you personally upon your selection to the rank of staff sergeant, but considering the size of the Force, I hope you will understand the problem doing so.



Holub

Since this, for me, is the next best thing, I hope you will accept my personal congratulations in this way on your selection and allow me to pass along some thoughts to you as you join the ranks of the staff noncommissioned officers in the Corps.

While I am happy you have been selected for promotion, please do not look on your selection to staff sergeant as a reward for what you have done in the past for your Corps and country ... it is not.

Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals and other personal decorations are for that type of recognition. Selection to the next higher grade of leadership, however, is not an award or reward, but recognition by your Corps and its leadership that you are capable of doing more in leadership roles than you have at the previous grade held. So, in short, you have proven yourself to have more leadership potential than you had authority at your previous grade.

The Marine Corps has recognized this deficiency and corrected this error.

What I am saying to you is that the Marine Corps has recognized you are a leader and has given you, by your selection, the additional authority to exercise that leadership for our Corps.

Joining the ranks of the staff noncommissioned officers is a major step not only for you, but for your families as well.

As a staff NCO, you and your family will find yourselves becoming more and more involved in

leadership roles in other parts of the Marine Corps family as well. For example, your spouse might be asked to take a more active leadership role in key volunteer organizations within your command. Or your spouse may be asked to become a mentor at the Lifestyle Insights Networking Knowledge Skills meetings to help a newly joined spouse in your unit learn the ropes of surviving as the spouse of a Marine.

Your promotion affects your spouse and your family as well as you, and I would hope you take the time to sit down with your family and talk to them about your increased responsibilities to our Corps and our country prior to putting your rocker on.

On a more personal level, you will now be expected to "willingly" take part in activities outside the normal duty day in the way of unit functions, mess nights, dining-ins and other professional activities that staff NCOs are required to attend. I do not expect you to attend every function that comes along, but I do expect you to wholeheartedly support your Corps whenever you are able to.

As you have climbed through the enlisted ranks to reach the rank of staff sergeant, you have been required to set the example. Let me be the first to tell you that, as of now, the Marine Corps' tolerance for mistakes has just grown smaller with your selection to staff sergeant.

Now, am I saying that because you now have a rocker on your sleeve or collar, you have to be perfect? Of course not. You still will be allowed to make mistakes, but not mistakes dealing with your honor or integrity. Those mistakes are unforgivable both from the Corps' standpoint and from your peers.

No one likes to tell you this stuff so directly, but I think its time we quit "taking the long way around the barn" in this issue.

If you are a thief, a drunk, a bigot, a drug user, or are trying to sleep with a subordinate or a subordinate's spouse, do not accept your warrant.

If you have used your rank in the past to try to gain sexual favors, do not accept your warrant. You

are a bum who has slipped through the cracks and have no business being a Marine, much less a leader of one. If you are doing these things, you have my word we will catch you, and when we do, you are done. Period! I don't care if you're the grandson of Chesty Puller. If you break the trust the commandant and your commanders have placed in you, you will find yourself on the way out of the gate. We don't need you. Staff NCOs must maintain the trust of our Marines to be effective leaders. If you cannot do that, we don't need you.

As a staff NCO, you must keep yourself in good physical condition, watch your weight, read military publications and actively participate in the commandant's reading program.

As a staff NCO, you must be proactive in your next level of professional military education — not just checking the box for your next promotion, but because you want to learn something for the future.

As a staff NCO, if you have not been on recruiting or drill instructor duty, I think it's about time you volunteered to do your part for your Corps now.

If you cannot do what I have mentioned above or are guilty of what I have outlined above, don't accept your promotion warrant. Tell your commander you were only trying to get promoted to earn more money or wanted the perks that come with rank. He or she will understand, and we will go from there.

But, if you can do what I have asked of you and those thousands of other things that go with becoming a great staff NCO, I welcome you wholeheartedly to our ranks. Your Corps needs your leadership and your professionalism. You will lead our Corps into the next century. Take care of your Marines, learn your trade, support our Corps the best you can and you truly will be a staff noncommissioned officer of Marines — not just someone who's an E-6.

Once again, congratulations. I am proud of you. Be a great staff sergeant and take care of our Marines.