

CW5 – Take Charge!

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During a recent presentation at the Warrant Officer Senior Staff Course (WOSSC) I caught myself lecturing (warrant) officers about “taking charge” of their corps. It struck me that other than the aviation community very few senior commanders in the field had ever work with or even met a CW5. Here was a chance for the senior officers of the corps to set standards, not only for other warrant officers but for the entire Army.

Of approximately 100 warrant officers accessed into the Army only 4 will be selected for CW5. This is a tough quality cut and one that insures only the absolute best – and luckiest – get to the top of their respective fields. As the corps has solidified its place in the Army as leaders, tacticians, and technicians there has frequently been some confusion, both from commanders and CW5s, as to what the role of a CW5 should be. Currently there are no Army regulations or precedents pertaining to CW5s, only authorization documents assigning them to TOE/TDA positions. I have frequently written about the leader, mentor, advisor role of these very talented senior officers, but, now what? Because CW5s have no role models themselves, they have a unique opportunity to tell the rest of the Army, by their own action, what can be expected from them and their corps; the ball is in their court and they now have the opportunity to “take charge” and write the rules.

Foremost in the CW5's minds should be that of a role model, for younger officers as well as senior officers. Simple as this sounds, jackets unzipped, boots worn over or not polished, frayed pockets, ragged haircuts and moustaches are negative role models. On the other hand, wise counsel, a positive attitude, great brief, or well researched and written staff action is a positive role model. When CW5s report into their next command, it may be the first CW5 the commander has ever worked with – that commander will draw some very quick conclusions from the new CW5's personal appearance and validate these conclusions with their first staff action or briefing. If you are a first class professional – and you all are – you will soon feel very comfortable in saying to the commander; “Sir, I want to be your advisor on all matters pertaining to warrant officers in this command.” Most commanders are so busy they will welcome this offer and ask that every thing having to do with warrant officers be routed through you, much as most enlisted actions go through the command sergeant major. Obviously, if no one is in charge of the warrant officers in the command then you should “take charge” by having a luncheon or informal get together and share your wealth of personal philosophy and professional knowledge on how you survived throughout your career. The younger the officers in the command the more important will be your wise counsel; they need everything from how to prepare an OER support form to expectations at social functions – I assure you that they will welcome this sage advice.

If you report to a unit and your boss assigns you to do CW3/4 work your task is to tactfully draw an analogy that lieutenant colonels don't do captains or majors jobs and CW5s should not be asked to do CW3/4 work – particularly if there are CW3/4s in the unit. If you do this right, a new and lasting definition of what a CW5 is has just been crystallized for the entire leadership. If you report to a unit and accept treatment like a private then you have also left a lasting impression.

I repeat here again – this is your corps, not mine or anyone else's! The demands in education, professional knowledge, appearance, and personal conduct that you instill through mentorship and individual effort in each other will be how the rest of the Army will judge your corps. Earn, expect, and when necessary, demand proper respect for you many years of soldiering.

(Editors Note: COL Crews, a former warrant officer, was then Chief of the Warrant Officer Division at PERSCOM. To this day, he remains a vigorous supporter of the future of the Corps. His sage advice remains applicable to all warrant officers in The Army, National Guard and Army Reserve.)