

Mentorship By CW4 (Ret) Greg Gouty

I thought I would write about a responsibility senior Warrant Officers (including retirees) have toward our junior Warrant Officers. Every senior Warrant Officer is a mentor and every junior Warrant Officer is looking for one of their own.

By definition, a mentor is a “close, trusted, and experienced counselor or guide.” A mentor is further defined as a “teacher, tutor, and coach.” Mentorship is defined as the “influence, guidance, or direction exerted by a mentor.”

Modern use of a mentor refers to an experienced senior leader or manager who develops younger, less experienced leaders and provides career counseling and sponsorship to these individuals.

During 1985, the Army’s Year of “Leadership,” the art of mentorship was revisited and revived. We must continually develop leaders who will know how to fight and win on the battlefields of the future and excel in every assignment. Mentorship contributes to the development of these future leaders.

Mentorship is a two-way street. The mentor must be willing to share knowledge, training, and experience in a trusted and respected atmosphere. In turn, the individual receiving the mentorship must trust and respect the mentor, while being open and receptive to the process. Caring is the core of mentorship.

Mentors risk disappointment, failure, and rejection. This should never be a reason to give up. We must remember that mentorship means taking some risks, to include allowing your protégé to make mistakes during his or her training. Without the proper command climate, mentorship cannot be practiced.

We owe it to our junior Warrant Officers to clarify their career goals and help develop long-term career strategies toward advancement. We must share our knowledge and instruct them in technical, leadership and management skills. We should also provide personal and job counseling where appropriate.

Above all, senior Warrant Officers and retirees must be role models. That is an important ingredient to effective mentorship. We must all contribute in the development of our junior Warrant Officers.

The Warrant Officer Corps has a colorful history and a rich heritage that we all should be proud of. Recently, I had the pleasure of listening to a speech written by Major General Craig, Adjutant General of Pennsylvania. In his speech the General asked if newly appointed Warrant Officers know our history, specifically whether or not they knew the stories of CW3 Ferguson, CW4 Novosel, CW2 Rocco, and CW4 Hennen. I thought for a second, I know of three of these gentlemen, but wasn’t sure about one of them. I ask you, do you know their stories? MAJ Ferguson, Novosel, and Rocco are Medal of Honor recipients. Then CW3 Thomas J. Hennen made history as the first and only Warrant Officer Astronaut. They were/are heroes, role models, and mentors for all of us.

As senior Warrant Officers and retirees we should strive, while being good mentors, to educate our junior Warrant Officers on matters relating to our heritage. I hope you take the time to look up these four Medal of Honor recipients and pass along their stories.

Below is an excerpt from the Junior Warrant Officer Action Committee (JWOAC) report presented at the 2012 USAWOA Annual Meeting of the Members: “The charter of the JWOAC is to provide recommendations/options to the u. s. Army Warrant Officer Association (USAWOA) Board of Directors (BOD) and Executive Committee (EXCOM) on issues identified by the junior Warrant Officer population, or as solicited from CONUS and OCONUS, and prepare a verbal and written report at the USAWOA Annual Meeting of the Members.

“The issues that have been raised by our junior Warrant Officers in their first Annual Report are: lack of branch mentorship by senior Warrant Officers, disparity in pay and status between Warrant Officers and traditional officers, networking between components, and the promotion process affecting National Guard Warrant Officers. Additionally, the USAWOA has charged the JWOAC with finding solutions to retain WO1s after their free membership expires.”

As you can see the very first item in the JWOAC report was about the lack of mentorship as viewed by our junior Warrant Officers. We can fix this! Pick up the torch and become a good mentor! The Army, our Corps and our junior Warrant Officers deserve it!

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