

- Use browser's FILE/PRINT functions to print this document.
 - Use browsers FILE/SAVE AS functions to download this document.
 - Use browsers BACK BUTTON to return to previously viewed page.
-

DEFINING SUCCESS IN YOUR CAREER AS AN AVIATION WARRANT OFFICER

by CW4 Robert Huffman

"To each generation comes its patriotic duty, and upon your willingness to sacrifice and endure, as those before you have sacrificed and endured, rests the national hope."

Charles Hughes

Success, as defined by Webster's Dictionary, follows two widely accepted and easily recognizable terms of reference:

1. *The favorable or prosperous termination of attempts or endeavors;*
2. *Having succeeded in obtaining wealth, position, or the like.*

These terms seem straightforward enough; however, given the evolving Aviation Branch culture and the ongoing Transformation of our Army, many officers are challenged to define what constitutes a successful career for an Aviation Warrant Officer today. When many of today's senior aviation warrant officers started out, CW4 was the pinnacle, so, we set our sights on that mark, along with pinning on Master Aviator Wings. Currently, with CW5 as our highest grade, many officers are recalculating this measure of success, and will say that the bar is now set a little higher. So, how does an aviator define success in today's Army of One? The purpose of this short paper is to answer that exact question. What follows are my personal thoughts on redefining success as an Aviation Warrant Officer.

For a variety of reasons, not every Aviation Warrant Officer can, or will, attain the rank of CW5. The primary reason is simple; the Army's force structure limits the number of CW5 active duty officers and positions. Currently there are only 227, CW5 authorizations Army-wide. Looking at historical board results, the Army will select approximately 40, CW4's for promotion to CW5 this year. Promotion rates, while healthy, reflect a "best-qualified" selection methodology. Given that, even our most fully qualified aviators may not make the cut to CW5. This is without question, the toughest and most competitive promotion board you will face in your career. Notwithstanding its rigor, competitiveness and relatively low selection rates, does non-select for promotion to CW5 mean that your aviation career has not been successful? OF COURSE NOT!

Each month, numerous Aviation Warrant Officers of various grades retire from active duty. In most instances, these officers have experienced successful careers. Consider what we do in Army Aviation on a daily basis as a means to define success. If, in your chosen career path, you have maintained the aircraft, trained your unit aviators to fly these aircraft, ensured your unit's mission was safely executed or that your unit was fully prepared to face any threat, then you have met the definition of a successful career. In retrospect, the accumulation of flight hours, rank and duty positions are perhaps important qualitative and quantitative factors, however, in our profession, these considerations should contribute in only a small measure when assessing your career in today's Army. Whether it is armed reconnaissance, MEDVAC, air assault or deep attack, the accomplishment of the mission is without question the most rewarding aspect of our profession.

Recently, I spoke to some of my peers who are choosing to leave the Army. These officers are competitive for promotion to the next grade and yet they choose to retire after successful careers in Army Aviation. Careers defined by faithful and proud service. They completed all missions safely and successfully while serving our nation in times of war and peace. In many instances, their accomplishment of routine tactical missions has achieved strategic success for our army and the nation. As you look to the future and begin to assess your own careers, try to look beyond what we achieve individually, and consider instead, what we collectively accomplish when we successfully complete our missions in support of America's national interests.

Editors note: At the time of this writing CW4 Huffman is assigned to the Aviation Warrant Officer Proponency at the Aviation Center, Fort Rucker, AL and also serves as the Aviation Committee Chair of USAWOA.

USAWOA Online 1/28/03

[Use browsers BACK BUTTON to return to previously viewed page]