



First Sgt. Jack Essig (left) conducts a First Responder Course at Fort Campbell, Ky. (Photo courtesy of 1st Sgt. Jack Essig)

By Example: The Army 'Raised Me Right'

By Jennifer Mattson—NCO Journal

First Sgt. Jack Essig is the first sergeant for the rear detachment company, Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, at Fort Campbell, Ky. In 1996, Essig joined the Army from his hometown of Cranston, R.I. He volunteers as a coach for football, baseball and basketball, and during the past five years, has logged more than 500 volunteer hours. Essig has also deployed four times in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Why did you join the Army?

I grew up in not such a good neighborhood. A lot of my friends and a lot of my seniors weren't the best examples, and I knew I had to get away from my hometown. The Army was the best route. College wasn't really an op-

tion because of financial reasons, and I knew the Army paid for schooling. My initial intent was to get a degree and get out. But here I am, 16 years later.

Why have you continued to serve as an NCO?

It's made me a better man. It's raised me right. It's a career. I have friends who spent four years in college and are still scrounging for jobs 10 or 15 years later. As I excelled in the military, my best choice was to stay.

How have NCOs helped you in your career?

During my career, I've noticed everyone has his or her own leadership style. I've tried to pull out the positives, use them and put them in my kit bag as I've

progressed through the ranks. Even poor leadership has shown me the right way of doing things, because I knew if and when I reached that rank, I wouldn't do those things.

What would you like to see more NCOs do?

The Army has gotten away from sergeants' time. I would like to see more NCOs implement that. It's up to us to find the time and to make it mandatory training time. Any training is good because it makes a Soldier well-rounded and improves everything they do.

How do you lead your Soldiers?

I try to do what they have to do. I always try to set the right example for them. If I'm not bogged down by additional duties as a first sergeant, I'll be out there sweeping floors, checking vehicles for preventative maintenance or any Soldier tasks. I'm always right there with them to show them a better way from my experience or an easier way of doing the task. I always push on my guys to get a college degree, volunteer in the local community and show genuine character. I'll pull my Soldiers into my office, sit them down and

see how everything is going — just basically let them know I'm looking out for them.

What advice do you have for junior NCOs?

I always tell my junior NCOs to take the job that no one wants and excel at it. I believe that's helped me in my career. Some of the assignments I've had in my career, you wouldn't want to sign up for them. But when you do them, and do them well, it shows diversity over your peers when you're being looked at for promotion.

How does your role help the Army as a whole?

We have 200 Soldiers staying in the rear detachment during this deployment. It's a complex company, with medical personnel who aren't deploying and Soldiers who are going to different bases or leaving the Army. It's trying to do the Army business with the diversity of military occupational specialities. It's providing Soldiers with all of the assets they need, with all of their different concerns. It's also assisting with our forward element, which is downrange. Anything and everything with deploying, we assist with that process. ■



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