



Young Sergeants Lead the Way on 'Not In My Squad'

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More than two and a half decades ago, I met my first squad leader, Sgt. Ochs. I was a relatively mature private who joined the Army at age 24. After my Initial Entry Training, I reported to the 22nd Maintenance Company in Heilbronn, West Germany.

It was November 1989, about a week before the Berlin Wall fell, when I met Sgt. Ochs for the first time. I recall immediately thinking that he took a great deal of pride in his uniform and was very intelligent. I also quickly realized that he was a very direct leader who always spoke with great clarity. During my initial counseling session, he laid out a professional development plan for me that was so inspiring in its commitment to lifelong learning that it instilled a drive in me and laid the foundation that's guided me from the rank of private to command sergeant major.

Now, as I think about Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey's "Not in My Squad" initiative and the concept of Leaders Developing Leaders that permeates through our Young Alaka'i Leader Development Program at the 8th Theater Sustainment Command in Fort Shafter, Hawaii, I find myself reflecting on how great an impact Sgt. Ochs had and continues to have on my leader development, and how his leadership has directly influenced the way I lead and mentor troops.

The SMA's focus on our tactical level leaders, like Sgt. Ochs, forms the core of the "Not in My Squad" program. We are a profession of arms. Our Army has no place for breeches of trust, incidents of misconduct, sexual harassment, and other conduct unbecoming of our profession. Our tactical level leaders must inspire and uphold that standard from the moment our Soldiers enter the Army.

But once those negatives are eradicated, tactical leaders have an even greater and longer lasting responsibility to their troops. The Sgt. Ochs out there must inspire their Soldiers. For a young Pvt. Binford, Sgt. Ochs did just that. He took ownership of his squad in the way he mentored its Soldiers; he led and inspired us in a way that made us proud to proclaim, "This is my squad!" I'm reminded of specific elements of that initial professional development plan he created for me. Every detail had a purpose, though it may have taken me years to understand what that purpose was.

It outlined how and why I'd complete many correspondence courses, to include the Mechanical Maintenance NCO Course and effective writing courses, and listed reading assignments to prepare me for Skill Qualification Tests for my MOS. When I asked him why I, a private, needed to take an NCO course and complete that level of reading, he simply, and very directly, explained that he was shaping me for future leadership responsibilities; he was conducting leader development. He was guiding me to where I needed to go, not simply where I wanted to be. He was demonstrating his belief in

the philosophy that leadership is not about "likership."

Sgt. Ochs also lived the example he expected me to follow. He truly personified what it meant to be a member of his squad. Inside his barracks room he had bookshelves filled with technical manuals, field manuals and Army regulations. His room appeared to be an immaculately maintained reference library. He was undoubtedly one of the very best troubleshooting mechanics I have ever worked with. During our maintenance time in the motor pool, he explained how our Army manuals and our military forms work, and why precise troubleshooting and attention to detail in our paperwork were essential tasks that we needed to master as stewards of our profession. He connected the dots of complex military systems in a way that still resonates with me today.

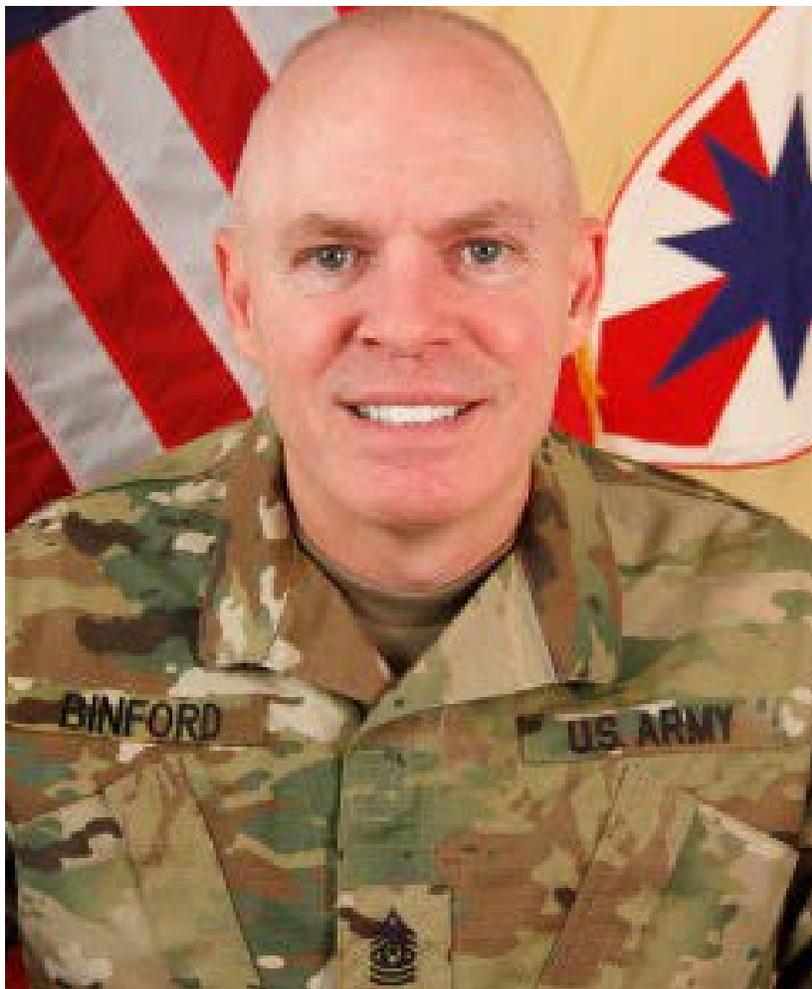
Professionalism radiated from this NCO, and though I may not have seen it then, it's clear to me now. That line in the NCO Creed – "I will strive to remain tactically and technically proficient" – Sgt. Ochs showed me what that meant long before I ever earned the stripes to recite it.

He'd often put me, a private, in front of the Soldiers in our section to conduct physical training and drill and ceremony training. He taught me how to correctly press my battle dress uniform and to polish my boots to the highest degree of shine. He taught me that pride in one's appearance demonstrates commitment to one's profession while also honoring those who have proudly worn the Army uniform throughout history.

He taught me that the best way to be ready for the next level of responsibility was by doing your job to the best of your ability while continually learning so you don't become complacent. He demonstrated a commitment toward developing those Soldiers who showed the initiative to keep in synch with his development plan, but also found a way to ensure each and every Soldier in the squad pulled his or her own weight for the team.

I vividly remember his belief that teammates shared glory collectively after they shared burden equitably. President Truman's statement on this topic is one of my favorites, "It is amazing what you can accomplish when you don't care who gets the credit."

Sgt. Ochs invested in me, as leaders should in their Soldiers, and



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when I was eligible for promotion to sergeant, I had nearly maxed out military education points and was making good progress in civilian education points. I also credit his inspiration for playing a major role in me completing a bachelor of science degree and eventually receiving a master's in business administration.

Investing in our future leaders, like Sgt. Ochs did in me, is the most important thing we can do to ensure the future success of our Army and our nation. That concept forms the foundation of my current command's Young Alaka'i Leader Development Program. As I witness the mid-career leaders who are selected for the program learn and broaden their perspectives through the shared

guidance of their senior mentors, the potential for growth resonates with me and reminds me of the impact Sgt. Ochs had on my leader development and the influence he had on the hundreds of NCOs and Soldiers I've been honored to lead.

Two and a half decades later, Sgt. Ochs is still with me. I speak of him often with my NCOs, always asking them how they plan to be that key leader for their Soldiers, the one they'll still be talking about when they're a command sergeant major. It's a great question for all of us who serve in this great Army, who call ourselves professionals: Are we somebody's Sgt. Ochs? Do our Soldiers proudly say, "This is my Squad"? ■



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