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Dr. Maxwell

Advanced Composition

April 8, 2021

Hooah

Raised in New Mexico, First Sergeant Rick E. Dean felt both the heat of the Southwest and the desire to join the military. Having a father in the Air Force and uncles in the Army, it came as no surprise that First Sergeant Dean played in the ditches of his front yard pretending he was in the Army. Joining the Delayed Enlistment Program, First Sergeant Dean would be shipped out to Basic Training six months later. “It was kind of a shock to me when I got to Basic. I knew I always wanted to serve but didn’t really put into perspective how tough it would be. It was definitely an eye-opener. Every night I would say ‘okay, I’m going to get up in the middle of the night and I’m going to sneak out and I’m going to go back home.’ But then I would wake up the next morning to the Drill Sergeants and the next thing I knew I fell in love with it, and I stayed.”

After being asked what kept him from running away all those nights, First Sergeant Dean responded, “My uncles all joined the Army. Two of them went to Vietnam and the other one went to Korea. I just didn’t want to let them down.” First Sergeant Dean was bent on success and did not want



to disappoint his family and wanted to live up to their standard of service.

The most important lessons First Sergeant Dean learned while at Basic Training were attention to detail, being at the right place at the right time, and forming chemistry with people who came from different backgrounds. “Being raised in New Mexico, there were a lot of people from the South and from the North that I had never met until I got to Basic Training and vice versa. I remember telling people I was from New Mexico and they would ask how I was allowed to join the U.S. Army not realizing it was a state. So, meeting all those different people and being introduced to cultures I wasn’t familiar with and then becoming very tight as a cohort unit was something I had never experienced before.” First Sergeant Dean recalls one particular instructor who instilled these lessons, Drill Sergeant Pipkins. He was an integral corner stone during First Sergeant Dean’s training and was responsible for transitioning First Sergeant Dean into the Active-Duty life. “He yelled a lot and would make you do push-ups, but he was also a teacher. A lot of us coming from the civilian world to active duty took awhile to get the hang of things, but he would take the time to sit down and explain what it was that we were supposed to be doing, which was very good.”

During First Sergeant Dean’s time in the Army, he experienced examples of both good and bad leadership. “When I first joined the Army, I will admit I wasn’t a great private. I got into some trouble drinking and fighting and that kind of stuff, and I by the time I made it to E3/E4 I wasn’t on track to stay in the Army. I had Staff Sergeant Gola, who was my squad leader that came out of Ranger Battalion, sit me down and teach me how to love the Army and help me discover my love for the infantry.” First Sergeant Dean vividly remembers one instance of leadership that he is forever grateful for: “We were in Desert Storm completing a training mission prepping for the real thing, and we were right on the Iraqi border behind our hindsight

for three or four days, and I found out over our radio that my son was born in Germany. When they extracted us out, my platoon sergeant was not allowing me to go to the nearest military city and call my wife and ask about my son. So, my team leader argued with my platoon sergeant and eventually got a Humvee and pulls it in front of the tent and yells ‘hey Dean get in the back and lay down,’ so I got in the back and laid down and he drove me all the way to the city where I could call my wife and see how my newborn son was.”



First Sergeant Dean also shared an example of bad leadership: “We have what’s called ‘stand to’ where you lay on the ground pulling security and you’re freezing. We had a platoon sergeant who would tell us to pull ‘stand to’ while in the middle of the patrol base still in his sleeping bag.” Learning and growing from these different styles of leadership throughout his Army career, First Sergeant Dean has proven to emulate the positive examples he witnessed and be a positive example here at The Citadel. Understanding and relating to the Crops as a group of college students rather than just cadets, First Sergeant Dean expects the standard but willingly meets struggling cadets half-way. Having had his own rough patch in the Army, First Sergeant Dean appreciates perfection but understands it takes a steady hand to guide someone toward it.

First Sergeant Dean has accumulated a plethora of awards, but the two awards that mean the most to him are the Ranger Tab and his Jump Wings: “I went to Ranger school twice, and that taught me about resiliency. You’re going to do things you are not going to make it through



or fail and it's about having the gumption to keep trying it. The first time I went to Ranger school I did not do very well, and they sent me back home to my unit to retrain. So, I did, and I went back to Ranger School and made it straight through. So, the Ranger Tab would be the big one. The other one would have to be my Jump Wings which is all because I am definitely afraid of heights, but I wanted to challenge myself. I told myself 'I am going to jump out of airplanes, and I want to be a

jumpmaster so I can hang out in airplanes.'” First Sergeant Dean’s other accomplishments include graduating Advanced camp, Basic and Primary NCO Leadership courses, Battle Staff, Drill Sergeant School, Jumpmaster School, Ranger School and Strayer University with a Bachelor of Business Administration.

Over the course of First Sergeant Dean’s career, his assignments included: Rifleman in Alpha Company, Erlangen, Germany; Scout observer and Radio Telephone Operator in HHC, Fort Campbell, Kentucky; Assistant Team Leader in F Company, Stuttgart, Germany, while assigned was deployed in support of Operation Desert Storm; Scout Squad Leader, Fort Campbell, Kentucky; Team Leader, Long Range Surveillance Detachment, Camp Hovey, Korea; Weapons Squad Leader, Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Drill Sergeant, Fort Sill, Oklahoma; Platoon Sergeant, Vicenza, Italy, while assigned was deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom; First Sergeant, Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Looking back over his career in the military, First Sergeant Dean recalls his service coming to an end and explained that he simply

felt tired. “I had about a year left in Fort Jackson as a First Sergeant for a Basic Training Company and I thought about retiring and decided I was done.”

After turning in his paperwork, First Sergeant Dean ran into an old squad leader who asked if he would be interested in becoming a deputy sheriff. As First Sergeant Dean’s last year in the Army unfolded, he was preparing for his shift back into the civilian world. “It eased up the hurt of leaving the military. It’s not so much the places you go or the things you do from war to leaving your family that sucks, but it’s the people in the Army that really connect you to it that make it hard leaving.”

Reflecting on First Sergeant Dean’s service, it is clear how the values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage have molded him into the model Army veteran. Bearing allegiance to the constitution, fulfilling his obligations, treating people as they should be treated, putting welfare of the nation before himself, living up to the Army’s values, doing what’s right, and facing fear are all routine habits that First Sergeant Dean hopes to instill in the Corps of Cadets by first doing them himself.

