

Gunner's Seat

Armor – What a Ride!

As my tenure in the U.S. Army concludes, I would like to thank all the leaders, Soldiers, Department of the Army civilians and families I have encountered over the last 26 years. The invaluable relationships fostered over my career is what I will cherish the most. I had the distinct honor to advocate for the Armor Branch regarding current and future initiatives that support tankers and scouts – not just today but into the future. I am grateful for the opportunity.

Twenty-six years ago I could not imagine the roles and responsibility I would shoulder. As I reflect, I am reminded of the power of leadership, good and bad. I consider the true meaning of selflessness and creating an environment for hope and dreams to become a reality. I ponder the principles for which we stand as the premier fighting force, delivered with humility and dignity and respect for all. I do not profess any conclusions or novel revelations; I'm simply sharing my perspective derived over the years.

Leadership is about the environment created by one's actions. John Quincy Adams once said, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." "Seed" of any kind will not flourish in bad soil! Commanders and command teams are principal agents for the soil/environment of an organization. I firmly believe every Soldier should feel a strong sense of value and worth to the team, from the youngest private to the most senior officer. Individual Development Plans, thoughtful and constant feedback (coaching, counseling, mentorship) and – perhaps most importantly – genuine care and compassion are essential. What within your environment is missing or what vines need to be removed for the seeds to flourish?

The phrase "To whom much is given, much is expected" is spot-on! The higher the ladder is climbed, the further from the ground and reality one becomes. Leaders must always strive to remain personally connected to the most junior Soldier in the formation. Many reasons are self-explanatory, while some are not. Unfortunately a percentage of leaders have forgotten the challenges (both personal and professional) that junior Soldiers and leaders endure, which make displaying empathy challenging. Leaders should never forget their journey, especially the opportunity afforded us all to learn and grow from failures. Selfless leadership entails humility, empathy and always using your position and authority for the betterment of others, not for personal gain.

Our Army has always faced enormous challenges; the present is no exception. Near-peer adversary advancements, partner-nation alliances, Army modernization efforts, organizational redesign – all during a global pandemic – are just a small list of efforts/challenges. No matter the challenge, we will succeed because of the amazing officers, noncommissioned officers, Soldiers, Department of the Army civilians and – our true unsung heroes – our families.

I would like to welcome CSM Levares Jackson and his wife Katina to the Maneuver Center of Excellence and Armor School. I know they will continue to be a tremendous asset to our Army!

Forge the Thunderbolt! Godspeed!

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