



This is going to be my last “Stand To” column in *ARMOR* Magazine before terminal leave and retirement bring a 20-year career to a close. As I reach the end of this phase in my life, I’m reminded of how it began, and how life in the Army has changed ever since.

I cannot resist the temptation to offer one piece of advice — surely you can’t begrudge me the opportunity to mount a pulpit one time in the four years I have been this magazine’s editor-in-chief. The advice isn’t just to my juniors, but to my peers and my superiors alike. A wise old “Gray Wolf” once said words to my platoon sergeant that a just reporting 2nd Lieutenant Blakely took to heart. I can’t quote him exactly, now that decades have passed, but it was something to this effect: “Sergeant Patsfield, we work hard here in this brigade, and we work until the mission is accomplished, but when it is done, we play hard too.”

Before you pooh-pooh those as the well-meaning but suspect words of a commander in the late 70’s Army, an army which had so many problems, let me point out that the Soviet Union didn’t accomplish many of its aims in that time period. The Army then **was** good enough in its milieu to handle the threat, so the Gray Wolf’s words were good and were worthy of emulation.

Work Hard — Play Hard. That maxim can mean different things to a lot of people, I suppose. Some would interpret it to mean better and expanded intramural programs, with more sports participation during garrison time for everyone. Others will say it necessarily means too much Mr. Booze, and we need to keep a cap on that. To others it suggests out of control womanizing in red-light districts, a deadly habit in this day and age. And true, those negative behaviors do occur when we play too hard or have leaders who don’t set good examples. It is rare now to hear leaders say much about the playing hard part of the equation except to warn their soldiers and troopers not to, because they will be hammered if they are caught hammered.

Today, any blemish looks bad in quarterly training briefings and command briefings, so it is better not to take chances. Instead, the phrase now seems to be Work Hard — Now Work Harder. No wonder that the life of a soldier seems to be ever more difficult for our recruiters to sell. Johnny with no play is an unhealthy boy and will quickly decide not to stay in.

One of my favorite leaders in the Army, a brigade commander, carried a sledgehammer with him everywhere he went. His intent was “to remind people what battlefield effect a heavy brigade has when it is used on an enemy — it ain’t a surgical instrument.” He and the unit were high performers in simulations AND in the dirt at the NTC, yet he routinely let his

soldiers out from under his thumb between exercises. Heck, you could even feel a loosening of control when ENDEX was announced over the net.

We worked very, very hard, but we played pretty hard, too. While we worked hard, it was a fun place to work. I think you have to let yourself and your soldiers and troopers have some fun in this business, or all of the well-balanced people will leave the Army in disgust. Those who remain will be a too high concentration of anally retentive “Type As” who want to staff the staff papers to see if we need staffing papers and then brief the results at 1600 on a Saturday afternoon. Oh, and you better not make any mistakes while you do it or you won’t be able to stay in the command hunt.

While in the past it might have been a good bonding exercise to hold a Friday “maintenance meeting” at the club, the repercussions today if someone makes an error in judgment are just too severe. So, as a result, we have become increasingly a force that just goes home after punching the clock and takes off its Army clothes because the job is over. Service used to be our way of life; now we are losing this aspect of service to the country. And that’s part of the reason it is not much fun anymore.

A lot of people in and out of uniform complain about the way the Army is right now. On some days I even complain a little myself. But make no mistake about, while there are specific aspects about the Army which I don’t like, in its aggregate I still love it, believe in it, and am proud of it.

Over a frosty mug, I have idly speculated on where I would have been now if I’d majored in business and gone that route out of school. But it is only idle speculation, for the fact is, that if faced with a magic genie chance to serve or not to serve from the beginning again, I’d make the same choice. To serve. Being a soldier, especially a tanker, was a child’s dream come true for me, and I rarely ever looked back to second guess the choice.

As I sit in my office looking at the bulletin board I’ve decorated with militaria from various ages, I don’t look so much to the past but to a future Army I won’t be a part of. I have mixed emotions when I think about the exciting things which are about to happen — that makes me sad. I am elated, however, that a strong Army still exists — especially when compared to any likely foe’s force — and that there are great guys in our turrets.

That said, I wish you all good luck and good hunting. I will always remain loyally yours.

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