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### From ‘hot-headed private’ to first sergeant, company senior noncommissioned officer is link to past, future of NCO Corps

By Pfc. Sonya McNair

12th Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs Office

**ANSBACH, Germany** -- It is 11 p.m., and the Soldiers of 12th Combat Aviation Brigade’s Company B, 412th Aviation Support Battalion are long gone from their daily duties. On this particular night, however, it is the time difference between Europe and America that keeps a hardworking noncommissioned officer on his office telephone with the parents of a Soldier who was injured while snowboarding.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY PFC SONYA MCNAIR

1st Sgt. James Hall of the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade’s Company B, 412th Aviation Support Battalion.

“This is an example of what an asset NCOs are,” said Company B 1st Sgt. James Hall of Sgt. 1st Class Ronald Correa, one of the company’s platoon sergeants. “He stayed awake the entire night communicating with the hospital to coordinate the injured Soldier’s leave, transport and safe return to American care.”

Hall said he’s glad to see that the Army’s 2009 “Year of the NCO” theme is about recognizing NCOs such as this one, focusing on their achievements, the need for building strong leadership and developing the Army NCO Corps through leadership and education.

Hall said he recently left a unit where a staff sergeant was in charge of a maintenance platoon of 76 Soldiers.

“How do these young NCOs do this? They do it by understanding their expectations, providing precise instruction, but more importantly, having a unique sense of responsibility and care,” said Hall.

Hall said seeing these attributes throughout his career have shaped his outlook on being a successful first sergeant.

“My primary concern, as the NCO Creed guides me, is the accomplishment of the mission and the welfare of my Soldiers. As first sergeant I am no longer where the rubber meets the road, but I am absolutely engaged,” he said.

Even though he must rely on his NCOs to interact directly with the many Soldiers in his unit, he said he still does his best to be a part of his Soldier’s lives.

“I make sure that I leave my office and talk with them on a daily basis,” Hall said.

Promoted to sergeant in 1997, Hall said it took the leadership of many good NCOs to make him a competent noncommissioned officer.

“My first squad leader, Sgt. 1st Class Dave Rickert, was the ‘sergeant of sergeants’ in my career. He took [me] as a young, hot-headed private and taught me responsibility, punctuality, work ethic, attention to detail and most importantly, how to listen. To this day he is a peer, role model and friend,” said Hall.

Hall said his first deployment to Macedonia as a staff sergeant had him working under Command Sgt. Maj. John Moore, and he has yet to learn as much as he did in six months from a single person. “I have zero doubt that his guidance, advice, counsel, direction and [many on-the-spot corrections] are what taught me how to be a leader and have gotten me to where I am right now,” the first sergeant said.

Today’s leaders must know or be able to find answers on just about anything a person can imagine, he said, and that makes education vital. He said he has confidence in the direction of the Army Noncommissioned Officer Education System, and that leaders must pursue education for their own competence and advancement as well as to be an example to others.

“A tremendous amount of responsibility is placed upon today’s NCO. The Army is technologically challenging and a civilian education is a must,” said Hall.

“It is the leadership of the past and present that will determine the future of the NCO Corps,” Hall said. “I am very proud to be an NCO today and I am honored to lead younger NCOs as they transition into and up the ranks.”

