

PART IV. THE ROAD AHEAD

CHAPTER VIII -- STONY PATH TO THE PROMISED LAND

"Cheshire Fuss," she began rather timidly...."would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the cat.

From Lewis Carroll's
"Alice in Wonderland"

The slatternly hillbilly housewife, with 14 raggedy-assed kids at her knee, nearly swallowed her quid of tobacco when one impetuous bairn up-ended himself in a kettle of viscous pitch. "Land o' Goshen," she grumped, "I could have another'un easier'n I could clean that one up!"

In the case of the Non-Commissioned Officer Corps, the Army ain't got that option.

Somewhere along the line, DA's gotta move the flagpole and repaint the rocks.

Boiled down to essentials, revitalization of the Corps hinges on three demands:

Attract quality.

Nurture it to maturity.

Ensure its lasting allegiance.

In this venture, the Army is eternally locked in desperate, cut-throat competition with civilian business and industry, both of

which have a fearful lever in the form of wondrous wages and comfortable working conditions, wrapped up in the 40-hour week.

By way of contrast, recruiting and reenlistment programs must convince the Beat Generation that the Good Life is layin' their lives on the line for 30 years in some forgotten sink half way around the world, with an unmarked soldier's grave the possible final reward.

Foolish attempts to equal corporate delights are doomed to dismal failure. There's not that much dough in the till.

To succeed in this awesome task, the Army must deal largely with intangibles which civilians never can hope to duplicate -- ideals calculated to excite the hopes, dreams and imagination of prospective NCO's.

The newly-formed U.S. Army Recruiting Command has stepped off smartly with the left foot. Its programs today are imaginative, forceful and alive, forsaking former clap-trap for compelling themes reminiscent of James Montgomery Flagg's priceless posters of Uncle Sam rasping, "I WANT YOU," or "DON'T READ AMERICAN HISTORY -- MAKE IT!"¹ Re-enlistment propaganda seems to be falling in step.² If USAREC added a special emphasis program for NCO's, similar to those now in effect for commissioned officers, we'd have the world by the tail.

Naturally, talk ain't gonna hold the best of 'em after the bands stop playing.

That's the moment of truth. Either the Army pays off or it doesn't. There's no use trying to be all things to all men. Now

that we've begun to knock off the Little Jack Horner approach, we need to replace it with a far-sighted, coordinated enlisted personnel policy with a carpet of hair on its chest.

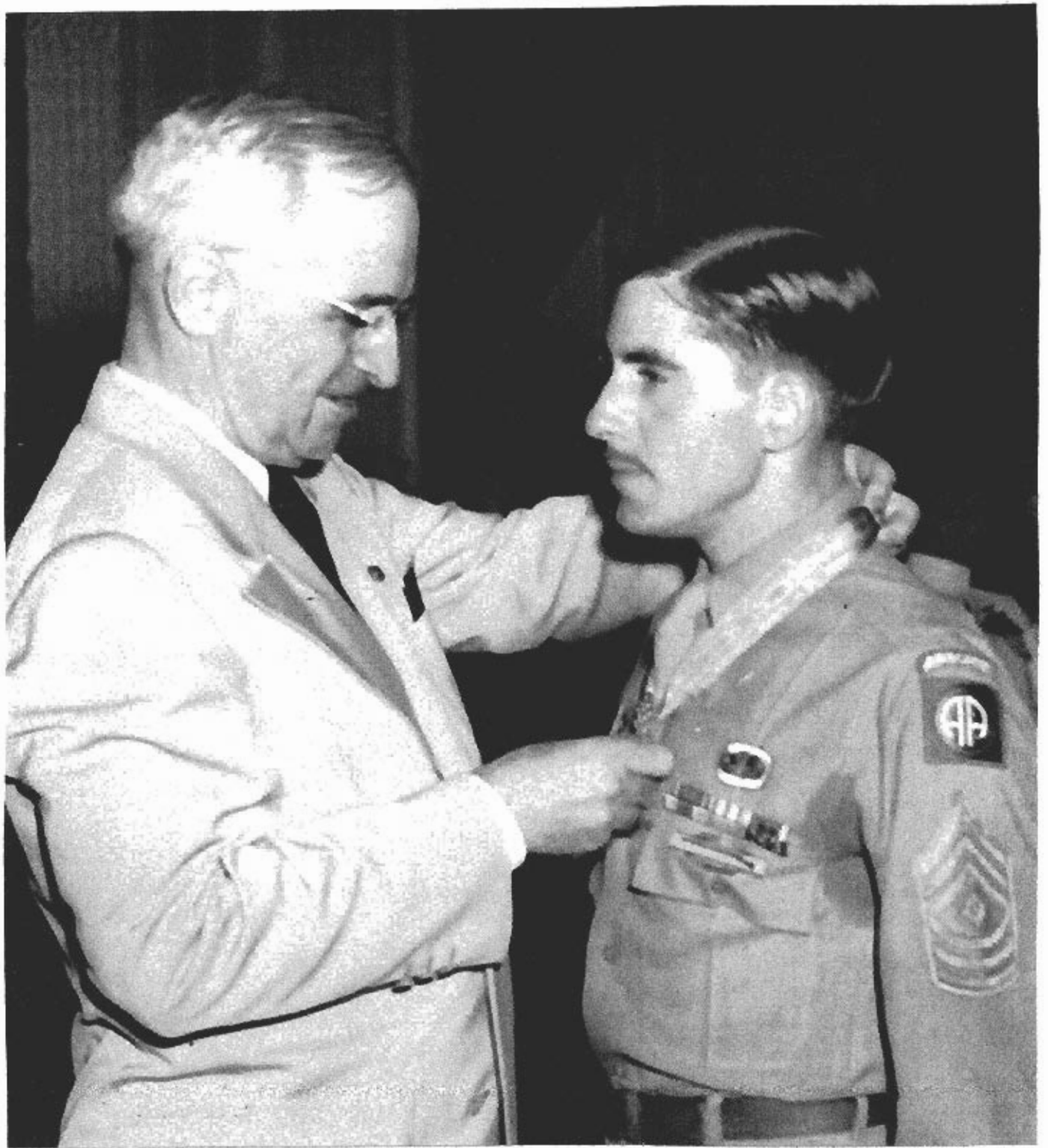
We can begin by hewing a way through the administrative thicket of enlisted precedence, promotion and pay that for nearly thirty years has stifled professional pride.

This is the real ogre. Not inadequate pay. Not the dearth of on-post housing. Nor niggardly fringe benefits, frequent displacement nor family separation.

No doubt about it -- every man yearns for a few of the fine things in life. Good food. Comfortable lodging. Fashionable clothes. A car. And enough cash under the mattress to cover entertainment and send the offspring to school. But if we tripled pay tomorrow, that act alone wouldn't hold high class NCO's. No leader worth his salt feels any compulsion to serve out a career with the best-paid, best-clothed, best-housed and best-fed Army in the world, but real men everywhere secretly have a deep-seated urge to be a member of the toughest and best-trained. Money's not the main answer, if your own true love is to soldier.

To facilitate this, the first two moves are self-evident.

Immediately, without recourse to public opinion polls, restore some semblance of order to the non-commissioned scene by stripping off all out-dated stripes, which serve only as maudlin reminders of a nine-year-old mistake. This should be reasonably painless; not many still remain.



8. First Soldier all the way: First Sergeant Leonard A. Funk, jr. receives the Medal of Honor from President Truman for derring-do at Holzein, Belgium as a member of Company C, 508th Parachute Infantry.

Then, without mercy, eradicate all slots for NCO's who don't lead.

Unhorse special duty piccolo players and generals' drivers, jock strappers, commissary meat cutters, baseball cap salesmen, golf course green-keepers and that proliferous assortment of route-steppers who sport low quarter shoes, white socks and laminated light duty slips. Make 'em all Specialist 12, if you must, but quit calling them NCO's.*

Give the Corporal back his squad. Give Sergeants room to grow. Let there be one Sergeant Major for field armies, one for each division and corps. Life belongs to the meat eaters, not to glorified clerks. Some temporary injustice might result, but the end justifies harsh means. Right now, we're killing ourselves with kindness. For those who really want NCO stripes, let 'em scabble tooth and nail. Survival of the fittest should be the rule, whether in the 31st Foot, or the Umpty Umph Decontamination Company.

How can we translate this opium smoker's dream into Twentieth Century reality?

Simple. Laborious and time-consuming, but simple.

* Commissioned officers, by and large, are generalists; enlisted men, by and large, are not. But the same justice should apply to specialists who wear stars or bars: barristers, money counters, sawbones, orthodontists and men of the cloth, together with that polyglot of permanent PX custodians and club officers who stand free of the chain of command. For these gentlemen, other titles could easily be contrived.

Policy-makers at DA level not only should prune Tables of Organization and Distribution, discarding cords of dead wood, but concurrently should remold the entire enlisted structure, making rank fit the tasks.

The optimum configuration appears to be a happy compromise between "Old Army" austerity and Cordiner's Super Grades (Figure 32).^{*} Enlisted leaders progress in measured cadence through eight explicit echelons from E-1 through E-8, which, together with titles, insignia and associated duties have been telescoped until they strongly resemble the situation in 1939, with several strategic differences. The net effect permits early entry into the enlisted chain of command, followed by logical, orderly ascension toward the top.

The extraneous nonentity, Private (E-2), unmourned has melted away, but Privates, please note, still predominate, on an order of magnitude approximating 50 to 60 percent, versus fewer than 40 in June 1966.³ PFC's are restored to "Old Army" eminence, as fire team leaders or assistant squad leaders, but beyond that point -- according to Collins' Law -- Draftees and first term RA's may not pass. Only proven junior leaders enter the hard core career establishment.

Don't sweat it. Privates First Class, in this context, could draw the same pay, give or take, as E-4's do today (Figure 33), and boast twice the authority and responsibility -- assets to quicken the pulse of prospective Thirty Year Men.

* Unless otherwise obvious, as in the next paragraph below, all grades and titles hereafter refer to Figure 32.

Power is revisited on Corporals, now lost in "New Army" files, that they once again might know the thrill of true non-commissioned dominion at an early age -- three full pay grades before their E-6 counterparts assume similar obligations today -- and accrue grass roots experience before proceeding to better things.

Pre-Pearl Harbor ambiguities, wherein Sergeants oversaw Sergeants, conveniently disappear (Figure 2). Staff Sergeants (E-5) come into their own, in charge of whole platoons, leaving Sergeant Buck to season, first as a section leader, in charge of two or more squads, and latter as E-5s' assistants.

Similarly, the two-rocker Top Kick is restored as kingpin in every company, battery and troop, in tandem at E-6 with SFC's, who carry the ball on low-level staffs -- battalion, brigade and group -- where they can get their bearings and learn. Key staff NCO's at higher elevations are a handful of Master Sergeants.

Only a chosen few, on a very select basis, ever accede to the ultimate, hallowed status of Sergeant Major, which brackets grades E-7 and E-8. Apprentices, if indeed you can call any SMG an apprentice, work into outfits below division. The cream of the cream, Senior Sergeants Major (SSMG), cap their careers as non-commissioned representatives and consultants to combined arms commanders, advising on enlisted matters across the board, and as coordinators, counselors and inculcators of subordinate Sergeants Major.*

* If the arrangement proposed seems unrealistic in light of the nine-grade structure, now inter-twined with three other Military Services, it may be modified with the flick of a wrist, by re-injecting Privates E-2, and raising all other titles one rank.

Mark well: NCO's at every echelon become a distinctive breed of cat. Leaders, and nothing more. All other positions, regardless of requisite skill or responsibility, are bequeathed to technicians and Super Grade Specialists. Wearers of the Bird rightfully enjoy full rights, privileges and status commensurate with their rank, but without exception, a line of demarcation sharply separates men whose primary function is leadership from those whose primary function is not.

None of this can ever be possible, however, until promotion policies give virginal noncoms the opportunity to develop a little maturity, judgment and commonplace, common sense skills before blossoming as the Big Boss.

Permanent promotions should prevail, except under national duress (Figure 32).

In the Promised Land, longevity, as such, all but disappears, replaced by minimum time-in-grade and time-in-service guidelines, beyond which additional tenure loses practical meaning. Within this general framework, promotions are based on merit alone. Mile posts merely provide reasonable control, ensuring adequate professional growth and facilitating early elimination of non-commissioned flashes-in-the-pan who lack staying power over the long pull. First Sergeants and junior Sergeants Major, whose duties demand great stamina and ability to keep up with young troops, arrive at the E-6/E-7 plateau with all their drive and vigor intact.

For those who find waivers irresistible, provision is made for dashing d'Artagnan's with an unquenchable urge to excel. No more than five percent are authorized to advance after having completed, say, four fifths of stipulated times-in-service or grade.

Who gets in, once these prerequisites are peaked?

Only men who can pass the test, mentally as well as physically.

The "Old Army" practice of rigorous competitive examinations should be reincarnated in this life, melded with distinctive features swiped from the Navy's swabbies.⁴ Catechisms consistently and deliberately should set the highest standards, in opposition to much MOS testing today, provoking practical application as well as questions on paper. Aspirants, of course, must be tested on ability to cut it in the next higher grade, rather than their present one, and specialist exams be different than those for NCO's.

Under St. John's proposed set-up, rank would take on its real meaning. Not even fabled Harry Houdini could wiggle his way into three-stripe prominence on his first hitch. Beardless Master Sergeants would be displayed in the Smithsonian Institute, along with 23-year-old Bull Colonels, dinosaurs and other curiosities of bygone days. For God's Chosen People, E-7's and 8's, there'd be some incentive to stay in and pitch after twenty.

Such a system looks good, dear reader, during peacetime and periods of modest fluctuation exemplified by Korea and Vietnam.

Only during crises calling for massive mobilization do substantial modifications seem mandatory, and then only with reins firmly in hand.

Brevets patterned after those of the Civil War are out -- they project the illusion of rank without accompanying pay. Far better, from the standpoint of morale, are temporary promotions, rationally applied to hand-picked men, with full understanding that they revert to their permanent grades upon cessation of the national emergency. With the lean, mean lines recommended, the modern NCO Corps should be able to pick and choose, even under stress, circumventing promotional petards which once hoisted Privates to Master Sergeant over night.*

In contrast with brevets, which perpetrate promotions without increased pay, the proposed plan provides cash in lieu of chevrons, in times of tension as well as tranquility.

Admittedly, this is an unabashed adaptation of Cordiner's steps-in-grade, with one all-important difference: dollar increments under the Collins Concept are entirely independent of time (Figure 33). Individuals democratically enter each successive category at the exact same rate of pay, but thereafter, step-increases are geared exclusively to merit; there are no premiums for apathy, or just for hanging around. Corporal Firecracker, on his way up, whips through all 10 raises before making Sergeant; phlegmatic plodders earn none. Promotion's the big thing. Without exception, higher ranks draw higher pay.

* During World War II, all permanent promotions were suspended for the duration. Many battle-hardened veterans of four or more years' service thus were still stuck with permanent grades of Buck Private at the end of the war.⁵ Without a prudent position to fall back on, the Regular Army then enlisted thousands of senior NCO's, who contributed to ridiculous grade imbalance.⁶

This approach is tailor-made for the spectacular cook who creates Chicken Tetrizzini out of left-over C's, but can't remember to order more crumpets for Tuesday's afternoon tea. Promoting this jewel is sinful, but total stagnation is stupid. By climbing steps-in-grade, Chef Boy-Ar-Dee, still sweating in the soup, pockets more dough than Beetle Bailey's uninspired and hairy Cookie, but he's reached the apex of his career, and he stays there.

How long?

As long as he produces.

Some men have scant ambition to set the world on fire, but in their chosen niche cast a steady and pleasing glow. The "up or out" philosophy is fine, but could deprive the Army of priceless talent at every echelon, if honored without discrimination. Guests who over-stay their welcome can always be removed by involuntary retirement or board action.

Renovated Pro Pay also could contribute to the enlisted renaissance in an off-hand way, if it were revamped to permit selective application according to the rank, responsibility and experience of its beneficiaries. In deserving cases, DA might well consider authorizing Pro Pay for young noncoms who grapple with difficult duties normally associated with higher grades, in lieu of premature promotion.

Idealistically, only keen professionals, E-3 and above, should qualify, but hard-skill PFC's (E-2) who show particular promise also might apply. Under no circumstances, should the effort degenerate

into a give-away program, as it has in some instances today; even in critical MOS's, not everyone excels. If the need exists for more moola to attract and retain quality enlisted personnel in highly technical fields, so be it -- but let's not confuse quasi-bribery with bonifide Proficiency Pay.

What next?

Training. Exacting, sequential and realistic.

No argument, the Drill Sergeant pitch is the greatest thing since Frederick William von Steuben. We've taken a Gulliver-sized step toward winning the game called "Sell the Army," and entrancing future NCO's.

But dammit, we mustn't stop there. According to Slim Jim Gavin's oft-repeated axiom, training must be more or less continuous and rejuvenating.

Enlisted specialist schools are alright in their place, but they are manifestly not enough. Such institutions mass-produce starry-eyed technicians versed in the use of exotic potions, magic wands and puffs of purple smoke -- diletantes, so to speak -- who can be likened to perfectly cut diamonds.

Roll a handful out on the rug, and they're worth maybe 10,000 bucks.

Mount those same gems in a ring, and their value increases 10-fold.

The ring is leadership. It gives direction and meaning to the wealth of space age skills.

Well, if enlisted leaders are made, not born, then we'd better get with the program. Come back to earth, DA, and lay the foundation for a resident NCO school system embracing elementary, intermediate and collegiate programs, relegating correspondence courses to preparation or refresher. This would create an academic environment availing all noncoms from Corporal to Sergeant Major, bridging the gap between field and orderly room, instructorship and staff.

Responsibility rightfully should be concentrated at USCONARC, where time, money, resources and know-how could readily be made available to turn out uniformly first-rate products.

Would the cost be too great?

Only for the penny wise and pound foolish. The cost of not educating our Non-Commissioned Officer Corps is evident on every hand.

Finally, we come to the master stroke -- relentless elimination of the "Mother, Please! I'd Rather do it Myself" Syndrome, a debilitating malady which permeates an influential segment of commissioned ranks today.

Those afflicted demonstrate an almost psychopathic reluctance to delegate authority for fear some hapless yardbird might rip his knickers, reflecting poorly on Ole Marster. Far from giving the Army back to the NCO's, officers routinely do noncoms jobs. Too many Generals skulk through motor pools checking tire pressures and grease fittings; too many Colonels lead patrols. This is supervision, alright, but at the wrong echelon, and the chain of command breaks down. Disgusted Sergeants just stand around with their hands in their pockets, waitin' for some commissioned clown to bawl, "O'Grady says!"

We've gotta let the Genie out of the jug. Start giving mission-type orders, then stand back and get out of the way. Encourage initiative and responsibility. In the process, we can expect mistakes. Lots of 'em. That's one way leaders learn. The object of the exercise is to avoid making stupid mistakes, or even making the same one twice.

The officer's role is classic: set standards that bring some sweat. Accept nothing less than the best. Give each noncom ample opportunity to show what he's got, encourage winners, and with grand impartiality lop off the heads of men who can not, or will not, hew to the highest mark. Volunteers for the block stand out in bold relief.

Like everything else worthwhile, revitalization of the Non-Commissioned Officer Corps would involve a certain amount of sacrifice, but as of now, purveyors of Army policy should cease to wait. Despite public breast-beating, wailing and gnashing of teeth by defenders of the status quo, who fear they stand to lose, Pentagon big-wigs need the courage to make these tardy decisions, and the will to see that they stick.

The prize is more than worth it: magnificent NCO's.

Indeed, if this country is to "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty," only the best will do.⁷

* * * * *



6. Sergeant Major of the Army, William O. Wooldridge, first non-commissioned officer ever to hold that title. A career soldier since the age of 18, he was sworn in as enlisted right hand man to the Army Chief of Staff in July 1966.

The scribbled names of American soldiers are big and black on the walls of Fortress Verdun. One entry has a plaintive ring:

" AUSTIN WHITE -- CHICAGO, ILL -- 1918

" AUSTIN WHITE -- CHICAGO, ILL -- 1945

THIS IS THE LAST TIME

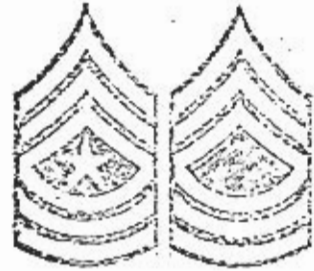
I WANT TO WRITE MY NAME HERE."

Like Austin White, the United States Army never should come this way again.

FIGURE 32

NON-COMMISSIONED HIERARCHY, ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN THE INTREPID

E-8 Senior Sergeant Major

E-7 Sergeant Major
Master SergeantE-6 First Sergeant
Sergeant First Class

E-5 Staff Sergeant



E-4 Sergeant



E-3 Corporal



	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>TYPICAL DUTY</u>	<u>MIN TIS*</u>
E-8	Senior Sergeant Major	SMG, Division and Above	18
E-7	Sergeant Major Master Sergeant	SMG, Below Division Staff, Division and Above	16
E-6	First Sergeant Sergeant First Class	1st Sgt, Company Staff, Below Division	14
E-5	Staff Sergeant	Platoon Sergeant	9
E-4	Sergeant	Section Leader	5
E-3	Corporal	Squad Leader	3
E-2	Private First Class	Assistant Squad Leader Fire Team Leader	1

* Minimum time-in-service required for promotion to each grade. If average age of enlistment or induction were 20, NCO's would reach the platoon sergeant level by about age 30, and could become First Sergeants before age 35.

Specialist structure parallels non-commissioned grades all the way through E-8.

FIGURE 33

ENLIGHTENED ENLISTED PAY SCALES, BASED ON MERIT

(Monthly Rates in Dollars)

	<u>Pvt</u> <u>E-1</u>	<u>PFC</u> <u>E-2</u>	<u>Cpl</u> <u>E-3</u>	<u>Sgt</u> <u>E-4</u>
Step 5				\$328.80
Step 4			\$252.60	311.10
Step 3	\$100.50	\$193.80	240.60	299.40
Step 2	96.90	182.10	222.90	287.70
Step 1	90.60	170.10	211.50	270.00
	<u>S/Sgt</u> <u>E-5</u>	<u>1st Sgt</u> <u>SFC</u> <u>E-6</u>	<u>SMG</u> <u>M/Sgt</u> <u>E-7</u>	<u>SSM</u> <u>E-8</u>
Step 5	\$387.60	\$469.80	\$587.10	
Step 4	381.30	440.40	528.60	
Step 3	369.60	434.40	499.20	
Step 2	358.20	422.70	487.20	\$657.30
Step 1	340.50	411.00	475.50	599.10

Scales above are schematic. Values have been lifted directly from the Department of Defense Military Pay and Allowances Entitlements Manual, 1 January 1967, after eliminating overlaps which presently permit lower grades to draw more pay than higher ones, and consolidating E-1 with E-2. Consequently, tables above fail to reflect accurately the huge divergence in responsibility between existing grade structure and the Collins Concept; squad leaders, for example, now are Staff Sergeants, but in the plan are only Corporals.

Individuals enter each category at Step 1. Steps 2 through 5 are attained on merit alone, divorced completely from time-in-grade or time-in-service. Ideally, each grade should contain a minimum of five steps, each worth \$10.00 to \$20.00. The greatest pay jump should occur between Step 5, E-2 and Step 1, E-3, which demarks amateurs from professionals. There should be no restriction on skipping steps, nor on the time between raises, but individuals who use up all steps quickly forfeit anticipation of future raises until the next promotion -- which, among other things, depends on a stipulated minimum time-in-service.