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Composition II

Profile Essay of a Soldier

The story of the United States Army is a long and bloody one. Ever since its beginning, in 1775, the Army's primary responsibility has been the fighting of land battles and military occupation in defense of the United States Constitution. Fighting in countless battles and wars all over the world, the United States has drawn the boundaries of many nations and has forever altered the course of the history of the world. Being able to serve in the Army has always been a glorious achievement in all generations since the beginning of our country's history.

In order to see deeper into what it takes to become a United States soldier, I interviewed an old friend of mine, Staff Sergeant John Rodriguez (the name has been changed). SSgt. Rodriguez served twenty years in the Army and just retired in May of 2017. He served one year in South Korea and four deployments to the Iraqi war theater. He didn't feel comfortable mentioning a lot of the awards he had received or what they were for, but he has received a multitude of medals and accommodations. He is a decorated infantry soldier; therefore, I believe him to be a very credible source for this paper.

SSgt. Rodriguez enlisted at 27, which is quite a bit older than most people are when they enlist. He said that he believes that most people learn a lot of good values from the army, such as the Army core values, loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage. People who serve in the Army learn a lot about themselves and are usually made into a better and stronger person. Not only does it physically break you down and build you back up stronger, but mentally as well. "There are so many wonderful aspects of service that it is hard to talk about them all," he said.

According to him, soldiers are given “so many opportunities for employment where, in a lot of parts of the country, there are none.” Soldiers get paid salary so that they always get paid whether you work or not. SSgt. Rodriguez also said “soldiers get chow every day, they live in nice housing, and they have great medical.” He went on to talk about how soldiers still receive a lot of the benefits, such as medical, after they get out of the Army. Also, you can retire after twenty years, unlike most other civilian jobs.

Although SSgt. Rodriguez mainly had good things to say about the Army, there were some cons to serving as well. One such con that we discussed was the amount of time that soldiers spend away from their families. “The divorce rate for soldiers, especially young soldiers, is very high,” he says. “Soldiers are gone all of the time. You spend a lot of time training or you are deployed. To me not getting to see my kids grow up because you are always gone is the hardest part about it.” We also talked about physical health. He brought up “look at me and you, we’re both nearly cripple. Just two worn out Joe’s.”

For my second source, I used myself. I served 11 years and received a number of medals and meritorious awards as well. I am as knowledgeable about the inner workings of the Army as anyone else who has served and have more personal experience, because I was a light infantry soldier, than most that have.

I, just like SSgt. Rodriguez, have mostly good things to say about the Army. It is about the most steady employment that a young person can get. The real world training that you receive in the Army cannot be gotten anywhere else in the world. Whether you pursue a career in the same field that you serve in or not, most civilian employers prefer employees with military experience. The discipline of being a soldier alone is enough to put you higher on the list and more likely to get hired.

One thing SSgt. Rodriguez and myself agree with is the comradery cannot be found anywhere else. Nowhere else can you make the type of friends and build the kinds of bonds that you can in the Army, especially during wartime. More often than not people that become friends remain friends for the rest of their lives. No matter what happens or however long it has been, you can always count on your brothers that you have served with. Beyond that there is just an unspoken bond between soldiers, whether you know each other or not. Just serving puts you in a brotherhood that there is no other way to be a part of.

Beyond all of the things mentioned by SSgt. Rodriguez and myself, there are just so many things that you get paid to do in the Army that you will never be able to do at any civilian job. Where else can you blow the turret off of a tank with an AT4 or daisy chain claymores and annihilate an advancing enemy force? At what other job do you get to rip a building apart with a .50 caliber machine gun or call in air support and watch F-16's start dropping bombs minutes later? What other career path will allow you to have a hand in the toppling of an evil regime and the liberation of an entire cultural group of people? The answer is that there is not one. There is no other job in the world that allows young Americans the opportunity to forever etch their names in the history of this country. Only in the United States Army do you honor your fallen brothers with "until Valhalla."

The United States Army has molded me into the man that I am today and has given me the strength to accomplish things that I never would have thought were even possible. The United States Army allowed me to serve side by side with some of the finest men that ever walked this earth, including SSgt. John Rodriguez, and there has been no greater honor than, after all of these years, being able to call him my friend. I believe that everyone should serve and join in that brotherhood.

So with that I am going to leave you with the Infantryman's Creed:

I am the Infantry.
I am my country's strength in War,
her deterrent in peace.
I am the heart of the fight –
wherever, whenever.
I carry America's faith and honor
against her enemies.
I am the queen of Battle.
I am what my country expects me to be –
the best trained soldier in the world.
In the race for victory,
I am swift, determined, and courageous,
armed with a fierce will to win.
Never will I fail my country's trust.
Always I fought on –
through the foe,
to the objective,
to triumph over all.
If necessary, I fight to my death.
By my steadfast courage,
I have won 200 years of freedom.
I yield not:
to hunger,
to cowardice,
to fatigue,
to superior odds,
for I am mentally tough, physically strong,
and morally straight.
I forsake not –
my country,
my mission,
my comrades,
my sacred duty.
I am relentless
I am always there,
now and forever.
I AM THE INFANTRY!
FOLLOW ME

Works Cited

Rodriguez, John. Personal Interview. 26 Aug. 2017.

