

HEADQUARTERS  
UNITED STATES ARMY ENGINEER OFFICER CANDIDATE REGIMENT  
FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA 22060

AHBBES-OC

9 February 1966

SUBJECT: Basic Requirements of an Officer<sup>1</sup>

TO: All Officers  
U.S. Army Engineer Officer Candidate Regiment

1. All officers in the United States Army assumed certain obligations and responsibilities when they accepted their commissions. Certainly, high standards are expected of all officers in the Army regardless of their rank or assignment.

2. You may ask, "what specifically does the Army expect of me?" General Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff, United States Army, clearly defined what the Army expects of you as an officer in a recent article entitled, "Basic Requirements of an Officer" published in the February issue of the United States Army Aviation Digest. Inclosed for your reference is a copy of this very fine article. I have underlined certain portions of this article for particular emphasis.

3. Each individual job, of course, has its own detailed requirements but often these are developed and refined by the individual in the job based on the mission of the organization and the functional area of the job. Any officer who possesses and practices the four "I's" as described by General Johnson in his article, will perform all assignments well and progress steadily up the ladder for a successful and personally satisfying career in any field of endeavor.

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s/Victor O. Wilson  
VICTOR O. WILSON  
Colonel, CE  
Commanding

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<sup>1</sup> Transcribed and prepared by MAJ (Ret.) Larry L. Castleman for the history files, 97<sup>th</sup> EBC, from original documents provided by John Ray Scrimpsheer, Pirmasens, Germany; Ft. Riley, Kansas; Platoon/Company Commander, C-97th Engr, 1967-1969.

## BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF AN OFFICER

General Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army

*(United States Army Aviation Digest, February 1966)*

What does the Army expect of you? I have boiled the basic requirements down to what I call the Four I's - an admitted gimmick I use to make them easier to remember. They are - Intelligence, Imagination, Initiative and Integrity. An officer who possesses and practices the Four I's can only go one way in my book - up.

In the category of Intelligence, I would include the development of intellectual curiosity, something which I am sure has been emphasized through out your career. You must challenge assertions and do not blindly accept assumptions. In preparing your staff work, for example, collect all the facts - not just those favorable to your point of view. Make a clear, logical analysis of these facts, and when appropriate present the available alternatives.

Under Imagination, I would ask that you project beyond your own experiences - search for new ideas. It was Frederick the Great who said: "Of what use is experience if you do not reflect?" This is not to say that all the experience you have picked up over the years is of no value - it certainly is - but there is always danger of making a broad generalization based on a very narrow experience. Today's work is proof that man's imagination can create new wonders, year after year. We still have many unanswered questions about the nuclear battlefield because there is no precedent to fall back on, except basically our imagination. We have an open season on ideas and here I add a caveat from a quote by Erich Fromm: "An idea never becomes a cliché merely because it is repeated."

Intelligence and imagination are of no value unless you use your Initiative to give them substance. We always need someone to pick up the ball and run with it, but of course, in an intelligent manner and straight for the goal line, not just back and forth across the field. The old cliché about the lowly turtle who only progresses when his neck is out still has a lot of meaning for us today. Too often people tend to quote regulations to prove why something can't be done instead of trying to find out how it can be done. Regulations are a guide and they are necessary, but they are not always sacrosanct. Any commander can submit a letter to higher headquarters pointing out where changes should be made when the conditions warrant. The "can do" spirit is a wonderful thing to see and it often moves mountains that seemed immovable at the start.

I consider my last point - Integrity - the most important, since without integrity the other qualities I have listed would function in a meaningless void. Integrity is simply honesty, and like loyalty it is a two-way street. Diligent application of the Golden Rule on the same two-way street is a good guidepost to follow. One must be honest with one's self, with his subordinates and with his superiors.