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Washington Guardsman appreciates camaraderie of Army

By Staff Sgt. Keith M. Anderson
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CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE Q-WEST, Iraq — “Take a deep breath and drive through it.”

That’s the advice from Staff Sgt. Selina Joy Wadsworth, squad leader, Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 81st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade.

The force protection non-commissioned officer from Bellingham, Wash., doesn’t literally “drive through it” in a Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle, though. But she never gives up.

“Take the good with the bad, as anyone would with any type of job,” said Wadsworth.

“Each person is going to come to a moment in their Army career where they will want to get out and quit, but do not base it on one single moment, or one single assignment. Don’t be too quick to give up on what you have worked for.”

Wadsworth, who is on her second deployment, said all-in-all, her fourteen-year career has been positive.

“There have been a number of bad or frustrating moments in my career; however, there have been far many more magnificent challenges and opportunities that outweigh any of the negative ones,” Wadsworth said.

Wadsworth said she was grateful for all the mentorship and guidance she’s gotten in her Army career.

“I would have to say that nearly every NCO that I have worked for has made an impact on my career, whether positive or negative,” Wadsworth said. “I’d say that the greatest leader that I had was back in my active duty unit. He showed me what it meant to be a leader and told me that to be the greatest type of leader is to be the one that you would want to lead you. I have held strong to that idea and always been a leader to my Soldiers that I would want leading me.”

She said you can’t always tell if you’ve made an impact on a Soldier, but there have been a few times where she got some positive feedback.

“I only know of a few times where a Soldier has written me a card and let me know how my service has impacted their service, and each time it has impacted my own career in such a great way,” Wadsworth said. “I was told that through my leadership and work ethic, it had renewed a Soldier’s sense of pride in serving and that I was the main reason that the Soldier reenlisted and continued to stay in the Army.”

Being a good NCO requires a little study time, Wadsworth said.

“I would advise a new NCO to attend Warrior Leader Course as soon as possible, which just touches the surface of all the information that a new sergeant needs to know,” Wadsworth said. “Find a Leadership manual, I have a few different ones, and continually read about what it means to be a leader, what different type of leadership styles there are and what a leader needs to know and do. Lastly and most importantly, find a senior NCO to talk with and be your mentor.”

Throughout her career, the camaraderie has been important to her, Wadsworth said.

“It seems like only yesterday I was pinned my sergeant stripes, and now I have my staff sergeant, but to look over the short time that I have already been an NCO, I’d have to say that I will always remember how hard I worked for my soldiers and how amazing my squad has worked even harder for each other,” said Wadsworth. “I clearly remember one moment out on patrol where I wrote and gave the mission’s operational order and saw each person doing the work that needed to get done. It was amazing to know that I had that type of influence to be able to set soldiers out to accomplish a mission.”

She has noticed some changes in Iraq this tour, from the last time during 2004 to 2005 when she was at what is now Joint Base Balad, Wadsworth said.

“While for the most part the country is basically still the same, the Iraqi military has greatly improved,” Wadsworth said. “The Iraqi Soldiers were simple farmers, working a few days out of the week as a Soldier in barely much of a uniform, with hardly any equipment. Today, looking at the Iraqi Army while we are out on missions, they have come leaps and bounds with uniforms, equipment and training.”

This deployment has gone by much more quickly than the previous deployment, Wadsworth said.

“This deployment has been fast, much quicker than I even thought it would end up being,” said Wadsworth. “I have been challenged and been given an incredible opportunity to be responsible for a squad of 16 Soldiers. Being a medic on my last deployment, I was responsible for their medical needs, and in this deployment I was responsible for every aspect of their mission readiness, day-to-day needs and overall success as a squad and platoon.”



Staff Sgt. Selina Joy Wadsworth, squad leader, Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 81st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, poses in from on a humvee at Contingency Operating Base Q-West June 25. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Keith M. Anderson)