

Mr. Robert C. Toth  
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Los Angeles, Ca. 90053

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Dear Mr. Toth,

As a retired Air Force Captain, the article you authored for the May 20th edition of the Times, entitled "Armed Service's Top Brass Not Typical of Officer Corps" really struck home.

Even at the time of my commissioning, in April 1967, after over ten years of enlisted service. I was STILL naïve enough to believe that all military personnel were evaluated equally! Once I had gotten out into the 'working world' within the officer corps I began to notice other more subtle signs of prejudice. Within the commissioned ranks, not only were the enlisted personnel (with the possible exception of the highest ranking and most capable) often viewed with a certain degree of professional 'tolerance ' , but the attitude of this 'tolerance' extended to the prior enlisted personnel such as myself, but even to the lesser of rated personnel. colloquially known as navigators.

Ultimately. I was scheduled for the Air Force career broadening school for Junior officers, Squadron Officers School, for a fourteen week session ending in April 1971. After arrival we were divided into small flight-size groups and placed under the tutelage of a flight training officer. The instructor of the group I was assigned to was a chopper/pilot fulfilling a career broadening assignment and extremely anxious to get back to the cockpit' A few of the classes were also designed to be conducted by the students and I drew the 'class' that was to constitute a mock promotion board for the rank of major.

Looking over the class materials for the 'promotion board' the night before my turn as: an instructor, I decided to try an experiment of my own. The object of this class was to simply split the class group up into about three mini-boards, send the personnel folders of the candidates through each mini-board and total the scores for each candidate at the end. The only 'new' wrinkle I decided to add, and one that I latter was told, in no uncertain words, was NOT in keeping with the school policy of 'integration') was to create one of the mini - boards of only flight-rated personnel and the other two mini-boards from the non-rated disciplines. As the candidates' promotion folders were evaluated by each of the mini-boards and a score agreed upon by that board I logged the score on the blackboard and passed that same folder on to the next mini-board.

The scoring began to came out about as might be expected by this time in the story. The non-rated mini-boards' point ratings for all candidates, as well as the averages for the groups of candidates evaluated by them, were very comparable. Also, the point ratings for some of the flight-rated mini-boards evaluations were falling in the same general point range as for the non-flight-rated mini-boards ... with one exception ... As I posted the numerical results for each of the mini-boards candidates on the blackboard, I made a coded note (which I didn't reveal to the class until later) of which candidate was flight-rated and which were not. After all the evaluations had been completed, I used my code to calculate the evaluation averages in every combination I could think of with the, by now, obvious results:

- a) The flight-rated candidates' scores were sufficiently higher that they would, without doubt, be the first ones to be promoted;
- b) The pilot candidates point counts were, as a group, higher than the navigators', with the 'support troops' all comfortably grouped together in the scoring pattern, and trailing both of the other two groups;
- c) With the tracking I had been doing of where the scores had come from it was obvious that the flight-rated mini-board had totally skewed the rating process in favor of ' their own kind"

While I had expected some degree of skewing, the magnitude of the differences .and the obvious source was quite surprising. The class received a lesson they hadn't expected, and I later received a course rating (lowest in my group despite the fact that my test scores were NOT in that category) that not only taught me something of politics but reinforced the conclusions gained from my experiment and let me know that I was definitely not going to be a 30-year retiree'

At any rate, you wrote a good story, and I merely thought that, if you're interested, this little anecdote could indicate just how deep the 'good ole boy' network for rated personnel actually extends within the Air Force. If you have need to, for any reason, you have my permission to use this material for any additional in investigations you think appropriate. I honestly think that all of the services, Air Force and Navy in particular, lose a lot of good people through these practices ... experienced people that cost a lot of taxpayer's money to replace and retrain.

Sincerely,

Don Chapin