

# **The Spouse's Guide to BSB and Garrison Commands**

**Dead Dogs in the Freezer  
and Other Fascinating Stories,  
Experiences, and Insights**

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# Introduction

Base Support and Garrison Commands are among the newest types of commands within the Army. Therefore, although some training materials are beginning to emerge, a number of commanders and spouses have agreed that they learned about the role the hard way; that is, when they were in it.

This manual was developed by a committee of former BSB and Garrison spouses, whose husbands were students at the War College at Carlisle Barracks, PA, class of 2000-2001. This manual is an endeavor based on the ideas, insights, and experiences from these former BSB and Garrison command spouses, offered with best wishes to the future spouses in these roles. To our knowledge, it is the only manual of its type, developed by “those who have done it” for “those who will do it.” It is our hope that this will be only the first edition of this manual, and that future BSB and Garrison command spouses coming to the War College will continue to add to it based on their experiences, and delete from it as our experiences become passe.

This manual is by no means everything you need to know, but we hope it contains some good information and some helpful suggestions. We have tried to include general information we learned from experience and wish we had known when we had started, without duplicating more technical information available from other sources. In many areas, we have made suggestions of materials that you might gather for yourself, because they will be unique to your installation. We have also included some of our memories and insights from lessons learned, some of which seem to be universal throughout the ranks of former BSB/Garrison commanders and their spouses. Although each installation is very different, we have found that our experiences and those of other former BSB/Garrison command spouses are surprisingly similar, because we were all dealing with people.

Those of us who have worked on the first edition of this manual hope that you will benefit from the experiences and information we have shared here with you. We also hope that, when you finish your two years of BSB or Garrison Command, you'll be able to look back with wonderful memories, as we do. As you embark on this great opportunity, please accept best wishes from those who had the privilege of developing this manual:

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Note: For the purpose of simplicity, commanders are referred to in the male gender, and spouses are referred to in the female gender. This is in no way meant to discount past, present, or future female commanders or their spouses.

## I. What is a BSB or Garrison?

*Achievement is the knowledge that you have studied and worked hard and done the best that is in you. Success is being praised by others, and that's nice too, but not as important or satisfying. Always aim for achievement and forget about success.*

*--- Helen Hayes*

BSB stands for Base Support Battalion, the European counterpart of the stateside Garrison command. A BSB is similar, though not identical, to the stateside Garrison. Both are military commands, yet both are very different from traditional tactical commands. Where tactical commanders are concerned predominantly with "fit-to-fight" and soldier issues, BSB and Garrison commanders are predominantly concerned with both day-to-day and long-term community and quality-of-life issues and operations. The role of BSB/ Garrison Commander is often compared with that of mayor or city manager.

BSBs and Garrisons vary from each other because each community or base is different in size, resources, and mission. However, many of the day-to-day issues BSB and Garrison commanders deal with are surprisingly similar, because they are all concerned with the needs and desires of people, both within and outside the military.

There may be only a small percentage of soldiers within the BSB or Garrison workforce. The workforce is normally predominantly Department of the Army Civilians (DAC), and in the case of BSBs, also local nationals from the host country where the BSB is located. Often, even the staff members of BSBs and Garrisons are civilians, including the XO and S3 positions.

BSB Commanders have the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Garrison Commanders are often Colonels, but can also be Lieutenant Colonels.

### **Chain of Command**

BSBs and ASGs. BSBs fall under the command of an Area Support Group (ASG). An ASG may command several BSBs, covering a territory of hundreds of miles. The ASG Commander is the rank of Colonel and is equivalent to a Brigade Commander in a tactical unit. The ASG falls directly under the

Commander of the United States Army Europe (USAREUR). However, both the ASGs and BSBs also answer to the Installation Commander, even though they are not in his direct chain-of-command.

Garrisons. Garrison commanders fall under the Installation Commander.

## II. Who is the BSB/Garrison Commander?

*It is not the critic who counts,  
Not the one who points out how the strong man stumbled or  
How the doer of deeds might have done them better.  
The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena,  
Whose face is marred with sweat and dust and blood...  
Who, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly,  
So that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls  
Who know neither victory nor defeat.  
-- Theodore Roosevelt*

Because of the nature of the job responsibilities, the BSB/Garrison commander is in a unique position. A majority of the civilian workforce on the base work directly for him. Many other civilian positions, although within a different system such as AAFES (PX/BX), DeCA (Commissaries), or DODDS ( the Department of Defense Dependent Schools), are directly or indirectly accountable to the BSB/ Garrison commander. These agencies are sometimes referred to as “stovepipe organizations, “ and work in partnership with the BSB/Garrison. Likewise, other officers are his peers or neighbors, but also his customers, as is every other military or family member, DAC employee, and community member.

The BSB/Garrison Commander’s responsibilities are enormous. There is no way to overstate those responsibilities. A BSB/Garrison is often compared with an octopus. No matter which direction you look, there’s another arm, and it belongs to the commander. The community financial planning is his responsibility, as are Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) activities. He’s responsible for the construction and renovations on post, as well as all other Department of Public Works (DPW) responsibilities. As mentioned earlier, he is indirectly responsible for AAFES, the commissary, the clubs, and DODDS schools, where applicable. He is responsible for enforcing traffic, childcare, and pet care regulations. He is even responsible for the cleanup of unwanted canine contributions within the community.

Additionally, besides all of his official obligations, he is often the VIP of the community. He will be expected to cut every ribbon, present every certificate, shake every hand, pat every back, go to every function, and do it all with tact, diplomacy, concern, and care. His social responsibilities can be enormous, as he is the official representative of his community.

It is unlikely that anyone would ever meet a BSB/Garrison Commander who didn't want to do good things for his community, and provide quality services. However, as one commander said, "Every good idea has a price tag." It is important to realize that a BSB/Garrison Commander's hopes, dreams, and plans, always faces the constraints of severely limited funding. Additionally, money that is designated for the BSB/Garrison falls within categories that determine how it may be spent. Terms such as "appropriated funds" (APF) and "nonappropriated funds" (NAF), two separate sources of funding that can be spent only in specified ways, quickly become a part of the BSB/Garrison Commander's vocabulary..

For example, a large percentage of BSB/Garrison funds go to pay salaries, but not to provide materials. Housing dollars may be funded for emergency repairs only, not improvements. Other dollars may fund an office, but not staffing. Some funding may provide for new construction only, when everyone on post wants his or her quarters painted. The BSB/Garrison Commander will spend a lot of time explaining to people within the community why he has money, but not the right kind of money. It's not an easy concept for community members to understand. Also, the bottom line is that training and the mission come first when money is allocated within the Army. Whatever funds the BSB/Garrison receives basically come from what is left over after training and mission needs are met.

The BSB/Garrison Commander is also the place where the buck stops, at least on a local level. He will eventually hear every complaint, have to deal with every disgruntled customer, and from time to time, be expected to spin some gold out of straw. He is the one who has to make the hard choice to send family members home from overseas assignments when they have broken laws or been otherwise disruptive to the community. He may find himself being blamed for policies and restrictions that bind organizations and businesses on post, but that actually are outside his control. One example of this regards regulations overseas that are set by the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the German government.

Occasionally, the BSB/Garrison Commander will also have the added dilemma of having to make decisions for the good of the community that might seem to be in opposition to the desires or needs of other commanders. He is not always in the direct chain of command to the senior tactical commander of the installation, although he is still responsible to him or her, which can further complicate the dynamics. And, unfortunately, there are still tactical commanders, and even senior leadership, who do not believe in or support the concept of BSB/Garrisons.

### **III. What does a BSB/Garrison Command Mean to the Spouse**

*I cannot help believing that the world will be a better and a happier place when people are praised more and blamed less; when we utter in their hearing the good we think and also gently intimate the criticism we hope may be of service. For the world grows smaller every day. It will be but a family circle after a while.*  
-- Francis E. Willard

As the commander and command spouse, a BSB/Garrison command offers unlimited potential for being involved in your community. It offers enormous opportunities and challenges for personal growth. It will be one of the most challenging endeavors you ever attempt. It will be one of the most rewarding positions you will ever hold. Within few command-team positions is there so much opportunity to actively make a positive difference in the lives of those around you. Within few command-team positions would you have the means to see the intricate workings of the Army structure.

A BSB/Garrison command is a chance to see first-hand the abilities and commitment of other community members, military and civilian. It is often an opportunity to meet and get to know people outside the military community, including dignitaries, in ways that you would not likely have otherwise.

#### **Level of Involvement**

*Why not go out on a limb? Isn't that where the fruit is?*  
-- Frank Scully

Your level of involvement, activity, and responsibility is up to you. However, you should understand that your active involvement can be a tremendous benefit to both your spouse, and to your community. Being actively involved might mean

something as simple as frequently browsing through the commissary or PX, or as complex as working on committees or volunteering. The important thing is to be visible in the community in a way that tells others that this is your community too, and that you care about what happens within it.

Probably one of the ways you can help your spouse best is by being his eyes, ears, and even hands within the community. By being “out there” in the community, you’ll automatically see things that are not working well, things that could improve morale, things that might pose potential dangers. By being involved in the community, you’ll hear people expressing frustrations and concerns that might not be making it up the chain of command to your spouse. You’ll get to know where the hot spots might be before they turn into raging infernos.

## **Expectations within the Community**

*I do the very best I know how – the very best I can; and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference.*

*-- Abraham Lincoln*

By being active in the community, you can unofficially represent your husband by shaking hands, patting people on the back for jobs well done, or even holding a hand when someone needs some encouragement. You can be a tremendous asset in building goodwill between the community and the command. It is one of those positions where others might not notice your good efforts, but they will certainly notice the absence of them.

At the same time, realize that you will walk a fine line. Community members will often treat you as if you have the power of the command behind you. It is important to realize, though, that you are an honorary representative of the command, but you do not speak for the command and you cannot even allude to making a decision on behalf of the command. Those who work for your spouse can be very sensitive to any indication that you are over-stepping your role, and it can cause serious troubles and ill will.

## Roles and Responsibilities

*I expect to pass through the world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness or abilities that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.*  
-- William Penn

There are some roles and responsibilities that, traditionally, have been fulfilled by the BSB/Garrison commander's spouse. It is your choice, of course, but it does make a positive difference within the community when these things occur.

Family and Social Groups. Usually, within a BSB or Garrison, there are 2 types of groups. There is a Family Readiness Group, and there is a Coffee Group. A third type of group, a Civilian Readiness Group, isn't often established, but could be very useful.

Family Readiness Group. The BSB/Garrison Commander is required by regulation to maintain and support a Family Readiness Group (FRG). However, this group is under the care of the Headquarters Company Commander. Your role should be only to offer whatever support you deem appropriate or helpful, or to provide assistance when it is asked for.

Coffee Group. The purpose of this group is predominantly to be a social group and information exchange. It can follow any format that seems appropriate to you. Some groups go out to dinner once a month. Some commanders' spouses enjoy hosting this group within their home occasionally, and members reciprocate with hospitality in their homes as well.

This coffee group is similar to, but different from, its military counterpart. In a tactical-unit coffee group, military spouses are often not able to work because of lack of jobs, or choose not to because of child-care needs. Therefore, they are interested in social opportunities and relationship building. In contrast, members of a BSB/Garrison coffee group are predominantly DAC employees who have been working all day, and are looking forward to some time at home. They enjoy the coffee group as well, but tend to want it to be more succinct.

Likewise, where a coffee group within a tactical unit is normally made up of unit wives who are brought together by the commonality of their spouses' jobs and mission, DAC employees may not even know each other. Although they are

under the large umbrella of the BSB/Garrison, the coffee group meeting may be the only time they see each other. It is not uncommon to have 100 people on your coffee group roster and have only 10-12 regularly attend your meetings. Often, BSB/ Garrison Commanders' spouses are frustrated with the low attendance at their coffee groups. Keep in mind that it is nothing personal. It is pretty much a universal problem among these groups. Just enjoy your time with those who do come and try to keep an open door for those who haven't.

**Civilian Readiness/Support Group.** This is a group that exists more in the realm of need than in the realm of being. There is a readiness plan for military members, but there is often no counterpart for the DAC or other civilian support agency employees from AAFES, DECA (commissary) and DODDS (Department of Defense Schools). Often, within a BSB or Garrison, it is difficult to even gather phone numbers and addresses for civilian employees. Readiness and support information tends to be distributed from the agencies where the civilians work, rather than from the command. Therefore, it is difficult to ensure that everyone has been informed. It is equally difficult for the command group to find out when civilian employees experience family illness or other problems.

**Communication.** Anything you can do to enhance communication within the BSB/ Garrison staff and among the civilian work force will produce positive results. You can develop newsletters listing community activities and other helpful and nice-to-know information and distribute them among the BSB/Garrison work force. E-mail provides an excellent opportunity for providing information. Sympathy, Get-well, and Congratulations cards and notes do a great deal to promote good will, and especially, to let people know you care.

**Social Activities.** There will likely be a wide variety of social functions for you to attend – everything from formal dinners to riding the carousel with the mayor at a fest. Often, you will be in the company of individuals with higher rank than your spouse's, or great status within the surrounding civilian community. Again, it is up to you how much and how often you participate. Realize, however, that you will definitely be missed if you're not there. Also, these events can be a great deal of fun, and are an invaluable way to make new friends of people with whom you otherwise might not be in contact. The important thing to remember is that, even if the circumstances surrounding an event seem intimidating, don't let it stop you from going. The amount of social activities may vary between BSBs and Garrisons.

**Represent the Command When Asked.** Be at as many meetings as you can, especially those that are directly related to the BSB/Garrison, and especially when no one else is representing the command. It is amazing how rumors and gossip will fly at meetings. It is equally amazing how your very presence will do a great deal to contain these destructive types of communication.

Special Activities and Responsibilities. There are special activities with which you may be asked to become involved, because of your position within the community. During a deployment, for example, you may want to or need to be involved in planning for and setting up a Family Action Center, or helping ACS with briefings. During changes of command for senior officers, you may be asked to help with or be responsible for welcome teas or other activities for the new command spouse. The protocol for these special activities can be different within each community and within each set of circumstances, although there are some guidelines to help. Your PAO (Public Affairs Officer) will be a good source of information in these situations.

## **Attributed Power**

*The best index to a person's character is (a) how he treats people who can't do him any good, and (b) how he treats people who can't fight back.*  
-- Abigail Van Buren

Regardless of how you act, or what you say or do, people will attribute your spouse's power to you. Therefore, they are often afraid to tell you "no," or will not because of perceived punishment/rewards. This issue is especially important when dealing with employees and soldiers within the BSB/Garrison. Even the most innocent remarks, such as "I wish we could replace that screen," will probably find you in possession of a new screen, because your statement will be perceived as a request. Satisfying your wish might then cost the command money that it can't afford to spend. Another danger is that the community will see as you being provided for when they perceive that they are not. The rule of thumb is to be careful what you wish for, and never wish for it out loud unless you really need it.

## Conflicts of Interest

*Trust your hunches. They're usually based on facts  
filed away just below your conscious level.  
-- Joyce Brothers*

Along these same lines, be careful of putting yourself and your spouse into situations that can be perceived as conflicts of interest. There are actually regulations in place that will help you with this. For example, it is against regulations for you or your children to work for any agency or organization governed by the BSB/Garrison, or a higher link in the chain. Often, these regulations may not seem fair to you or your family, but ultimately, they are there for your and your spouse's protection.

## Who You Are and Who You Aren't

*There are two ways of spreading light:  
to be the candle or the mirror that receives it.  
-- Edith Wharton*

Because of the nature of the command and the power and prestige that can be attributed to it, it is easy to stumble into situations that bring you down to earth quickly. The important thing to remember is that your position is often a misleading one. On one hand, it is good for you to be visible in the community, and most groups will appreciate your participation. However, you are not the commander, and usually, you are not even the senior spouse. When groups and organizations within the community have any choice, they will almost always choose for official activities to be conducted by your spouse, the senior command spouse, or even another officer within the command. It doesn't always seem fair, but it is almost always true. Again, it is not a personal snub; it's just the way things are.

## Setting Boundaries

*My candle burns at both its ends;  
It will not last the night;  
But oh, my foes, and oh, my friends –  
It gives a lovely light.  
-- Edna St. Vincent Millay*

One of your most important challenges will be to guard your family environment and set your own boundaries. Being a part of the community is extremely important, but so is your personal well being and that of your family. It will be necessary as you determine what your role in the community will be, to also determine what it will not be. You can be active in as much or as little as you want or need to be; but, perhaps you should not be in charge of any group. It will also be necessary for you to know what you can and cannot do. You can listen to problems, but you cannot fix them, nor should you always try. You can be a conduit of information to your spouse, but it is not your responsibility to act on behalf of every community member. Guard yourself against burnout by setting boundaries for yourself that you will ordinarily not be willing to cross.

Remember, too, that is ok for you to set priorities, even if it means that you miss a function from time to time. As stated before, your presence at anything will certainly be perceived as a benefit; however, people within your community may not realize that it's the fourth evening that week that you would be away from your children.

## Other Suggestions

*I don't know the key to success, but the key  
to failure is trying to please everybody.  
-- Bill Cosby*

Carry suggestion/ comment cards. This is a good way to protect yourself from being made responsible for everyone else's complaints and suggestions. If someone brings a concern to your attention, you can listen, and then give them a card to fill out on the spot. They can then return it to you immediately and you can give it to your spouse. The person with the concern knows they have been heard, and the BSB/Garrison will receive valuable information.

Carry a phone list for referral purposes. This will allow you to give the number to the other person, which will save both of you time, and help you avoid receiving an unnecessary phone call later.

The S1 is your friend. He or she will be a good source when you need rosters or other information.

Know what you'll do for civilian emergencies. Discuss with your spouse what you will do in the event of trauma, illness, death, or other immediate emergency among the civilian work force. Usually, these things are cared for within the directorate with whom the civilian works; however, it is not safe to assume that this is happening. It is appropriate to check with the directorate and offer your help as needed.

It's hard to argue with facts and figures. Arm yourself with as much information as you can, but then, don't be surprised when people argue against it anyway.

Know the value of listening. Most people know that your spouse cannot fix a lot of their problems. When they complain, often all they want is to know that someone hears what they are saying and cares. By listening to them, even if you don't agree with them and even if you already know that you can't help them, you meet their need.

Attend the town hall meetings. These are quarterly meetings held by the BSB/Garrison to enable community members to air concerns and the command to provide feedback and optimally, solutions. Many problems that are voiced frequently within the community will come up at the town hall meetings, and you

will be able to report the outcome when you hear it again. You will gain a lot of valuable information there of all types, and you'll get to know members of the community. Also, your spouse and every member of the BSB/Garrison staff will appreciate your support. Yours may be the only smiling face they see there.

Get an Extra Phone. Believe it or not, there may be times when your private phone, the DSN line (an official phone line similar to the AUTOVON), and your spouse's cell phone are ringing at the same time, and sometimes, it's in the middle of the night. One of the best things you can do for yourself is to make sure that you have a phone by your bed. And, make sure it's placed on your spouse's side! A cordless phone is an especially good idea.

Also, make sure you have an answering machine. It will allow you to return calls at convenient times for you, rather than answering the phone 20 times during dinner.

### Read Your Local Newspaper

The more you are informed, the more you will be equipped to answer questions and stop rumors. The local newspaper will be a good source of information regarding things happening on post and within the local community. Also, people appreciate it when you can tell them that you saw their child's picture in the paper because they have won an award or other recognition.

## **Guidance**

*Confidence... thrives on honesty, on honor, on the sacredness  
of obligations, on faithful protection and on unselfish performance.  
Without them, it cannot live.*

*-- Franklin D. Roosevelt*

Very often, particularly in BSBs, the ASG Commander' and his spouse live in a separate community, often hours away. They will try to provide guidance for you as much as possible; however, because of the number of installations the ASG commands, it is not always possible for the ASG Commander's spouse to visit with you frequently. Therefore, it is a good idea to stay in touch via phone or e-mail. Know, though, that she is there if you need her.

## Building Your Own Support Group

*The human race is divided into two classes – those that go ahead and do something and those who sit still and inquire,  
“Why wasn’t it done the other way?”  
-- Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.*

As you become known in the community, you may get tired of people greeting you with their complaints and conversely, sometimes acting as if they cannot speak freely in front of you. You may also find yourself getting frustrated with the fact that everyone always knows who you are, even if they don’t know you personally. It is not always easy to know who is authentic in their friendships with you, because of your spouse’s position. Therefore, it is important to find places and people within the community that are “neutral ground” for you, where you can pursue and develop trustworthy friendships. This might be the chapel or a chapel-sponsored group, a bunko game group, or a book club – any place where others can get to know the real you.

Likewise, if possible, determine where your “safe ground” is. This is a time when you really do need to be careful about the information you share with others, for both your and your spouse’s protection. Proceed cautiously until you know whom you can trust with your confidences, and then still proceed cautiously.

It’s also a good idea to develop friendships with other BSB or Garrison Command teams. You’ll find as you talk that you really do know what each other is going through. It will give you a lot of encouragement to know that you really are not alone in your experiences.

## Protecting Your Family

*Lost, yesterday, somewhere between sunrise and sunset,  
two golden hours, each set with sixty diamond minutes.  
No reward is offered, for they are gone forever.  
-- Horace Mann*

Remember that your family is what is left when this is all over, and it will be over surprisingly fast. Don't do anything that jeopardizes your relationships with each other, and particularly with your kids. We, as adults, had a choice about all this. They didn't. They deserve to have normal childhoods with normal parents. Ten years from now, few people, if any, will remember what you did in this command, but your kids will always remember what you did and didn't do for and with them.

Always keep in mind that with good care, your spouse's command will last for two years. With good care, your family will last forever.

## IV. Getting Off to a Good Start

*The pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; the optimist,  
the opportunity in every difficulty.*  
-- L.P. Jacks

It will be tremendously helpful to you in the beginning of your spouse's command to gather as much information as possible. There are many ways to do this.

### Prepare Yourself

*Our belief at the beginning of a doubtful undertaking is  
The one thing that insures the successful outcome of our venture.*  
-- William James

There are some things you can do ahead of time to make your entrance into the community and your new role easier.

1. Gather some good source material on e etiquette, military protocol, entertaining ideas, etc. Some of our recommendations are listed in Appendix A. Again, it is better to have too much information, and even better when that information is at your fingertips.
- Learn the language. If your spouse will command overseas, attempt to learn as much of the host-nation language as you possibly can. Even if you have time to only learn how to say "hello" and "goodbye", the local nationals will appreciate your effort more than you might realize. And, the more you can communicate, the more potential you'll have to enjoy opportunities that come your way.
- Go shopping. You will need a lot of clothes during your spouse's command. Especially, you'll need a lot of those "middle of the road" kind of clothes – nice slacks, sweaters, skirts, and "cocktail" types of dress-wear, as well as some

formal wear and comfortable shoes for every occasion. Particularly if you're going overseas, you may want to stock up as much as possible before arriving there. Spend some money on your spouse too. He will need at least one good suit (two is better), a couple of sports coats, and both casual and dress slacks.

- Get a large 3-ring binder to keep phone rosters, regulations, and other helpful information in. In Germany, commander's spouses should be given a copy of the "Starburst" manual by the out-going commander's spouse, which will include a lot of local information and provide spaces for you to insert other items of interest. If you cannot get one of these, however, you can make something similar for yourself with a 3-ring binder. We'll give recommendations for this later.
- Buy yourself a quality 3-hole punch, especially if you are going overseas, where they can be difficult to find.
- Buy a purse-sized calendar, as well as a wall calendar you can use at home. This will be a valuable tool for you, so choose one that works for you.

## **Talk to the Current Commander's Spouse**

*The farther backward you can look,  
The farther forward you are likely to see.  
-- Winston Churchill*

Establishing communication with the current commander's spouse will make your transition easier for both of you. Ideally, she should call you to congratulate you and your spouse on your selection for command, to brief you on what you can expect, and to answer any questions you might have. She might identify people who will offer you help within the community, as well as those who might provide some challenges. It is wise to listen to her counsel, but at the same time, try to stay open-minded. Individuals will often react differently to different personalities; so it's always fair to give someone a chance. However, it is also wise to not put yourself or your spouse out on a limb with people who have consistently created problems for prior commanders. Sometimes, being forewarned is being forearmed.

## Find Out About Change of Command Protocol

*I think knowing what you can not do is more important than knowing what you can do. In fact, that's good taste.*  
-- Lucille Ball

You may ask the current command spouse for information regarding how change-of-command receptions are accomplished. She will be able to provide you with basic information, but you should also discuss the change-of-command reception with the PAO. For example, within the U.S., incoming Garrison Commanders normally pay for the reception; in Germany, the PAO pays for the reception for in-coming BSB Commanders as a public-relations gesture. Therefore, incoming Garrison Commanders and their spouses may be asked to provide information regarding how much they are willing to spend for the reception, and their menu selections. Those things may already be determined for incoming BSB Commanders. You will also be asked to provide an invitation list for the change-of-command. This is your personal list; be aware that the BSB/Garrison PAO will also have a list of local dignitaries who will be invited as a good-will gesture to the community.

Also, ask the PAO about what you might expect and what you will need to do during the change-of-command and reception. For example, do you stand when you are presented with flowers? What do you do when the host-nation anthem is played? What do you need to do in the receiving line?

## Tours and Briefings

*Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.*  
-- Will Rogers

Within a few hours of your spouse accepting command, and sometimes even right before the ceremony, the new commander will be taken on a tour of the post

he is inheriting. He will visit every agency and service, and he will meet with every department head and agency/service executive. At the end of the day, although he'll still have a lot to learn, he will also have a fairly accurate view of what he is responsible for and will know the faces of those in charge.

It is to your advantage to be included in these tours and briefings. Particularly, you might want to visit Army Community Services, the Department of Community Activities, Youth Services, the Child Development Center, the schools, and the local Community Club. Although you may not necessarily be immediately invited on this tour, usually through oversight in the press of time, make sure that your spouse knows that you want to be included. He will have the ability to make it happen, and he should not hesitate to make this request. It will get you off to a good start because you, too, will see your spouse's responsibilities first-hand and get at least a basic understanding of your new community and how it functions. Understand, too, that this is a tour that will take most of the day.

If there are additional briefings, you should also ask to be included in these, whenever it is feasible and appropriate. A lot of it might be more technical than you need to know, but too much information is better than not enough, and your spouse can help you determine what will be helpful to you. Again, understand that even the command staff might not automatically include you in these initial briefings. There are many reasons for this, including their uncertainty regarding what you might be interested in. In the early days, especially, they are anxious not to offend or impose expectations on both of you.

## **Get to Know the PAO**

*The life of wisdom must be a life  
of contemplation combined with action.  
-- M. Scott Peck*

The Public Affairs Officer within the BSB or Garrison will be one of your greatest assets. They will help you determine what functions you need to attend, will ensure that you meet dignitaries, will help you with protocol, and can even tell you what type of clothing you should wear for each occasion. Often, PAOs were born in the surrounding community, or have lived there for a good length of time. Therefore, they offer not just up-to-date information, but also history. They will know who is the mayor today, but also, who was the mayor or the Senator, or the

Oberbergermeister ten years ago. They are one of the BSB/ Garrison employees who are dedicated to making your job as easy and productive as possible, because that in turn will build good will within and toward the command.

It would be wise to ask for a separate meeting with the PAO to discuss what you'll be doing, especially in the extended community. This is also a good time to discuss other topics, such as when it is appropriate to bring your children to various events. Even at fests or similar activities, you'll usually be sitting at the dignitaries' table, so it may not always be a good idea to bring your children. A good rule of thumb is to always ask the PAO for guidance on these matters.

The PAO can help you to understand traditional events, and the protocol that surrounds them. Also, the PAO can help you understand which events within the community are hosted and paid for by the BSB/Garrison through PAO funds. For example, in Germany, the PAO typically funds 4 functions per year. These will include the BSB Change of Command, as well as a Christmas reception, a host-nation Thanksgiving dinner, a 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration, and/or a New Year's reception. This can be confusing because, although the BSB/Garrison may fund these events, the Installation Commander may act as the official host. The Installation Commander also may use BSB/Garrison funds within certain parameters.

Additionally, the PAO can help you understand how to respond if you should be approached by members of the press or other agencies. It is also a good idea for you to take the AFTB classes regarding the PAO and the media.

## **Walk Softly**

Probably every new command team comes into a community hoping to make a positive difference. Therefore, it is very easy as you begin to look around to notice all the things that still need to be "fixed." It is also very easy to tell all those around you that you are going to get done all the things that your predecessors left undone, or to insinuate that you'll do the job "better" than they did it. Although it is unlikely that any one of us would ever make a statement like this to intentionally hurt or belittle our predecessor, this is usually the effect.

In those first days, as you get to know your new community, think hard about what you say and do. There are many reasons for this. The first is, of course, to avoid causing the previous commander and his spouse any pain. Another reason is that you don't yet know how quickly your words and attitudes can come back to haunt you. Getting things done within a BSB or Garrison is not always an easy thing. Each effort is dependent on funding, staffing, cooperation, and even the personalities of senior officers. When you are tempted to feel superior or condemning, imagine how you will feel when you are the exiting command team. Do your best to be kind in your remarks and attitudes.

## V. The Change of Command

*We need you, we need your youth, your strength, and your idealism, to help us make right that which is wrong. I know you have been critically looking at the mores and customs of the past and questioning their value. Every generation does that. But don't discard the time-tested values upon which civilization is built just because they are old. More important, don't let the doom criers and the cynics persuade you that the best is past – that from here it's all downhill. Each generation goes further than the generation preceding it because it stands on the shoulders of that generation.*

*You will have opportunities beyond anything we've ever known.*

*– Ronald Reagan*

The Change of Command for BSB/ Garrison Commanders will probably be quite different from a tactical change of command. There are no huge numbers of soldiers to stand at salute. Instead, there will usually be a Headquarters Company of soldiers present, and a representation of the DAC, all dressed in white shirt and black pants. In BSB changes of command, there may also be a representation of local national workers, and the Headquarters Company from the host-nation army. When you survey the assemblage of these units, your first thought might be that it is not up to par with the military battalion changes of command you're used to. However, it will still be a memorable ceremony, just in a different way.

Because of the visibility of the BSB/Garrison commander within and outside the military community, you will likely be standing in the receiving line for a very long time. Especially overseas, there will be a large number of local dignitaries from area communities.

The reception will likely be more extravagant than the normal battalion change of command, because of the dignitaries involved. How this is accomplished will be different within different posts and areas. You and your spouse should discuss this with your XO and, possibly, the PAO or Protocol. In Germany, BSB change of command receptions are considered as goodwill gestures toward the German community, and therefore are quite elaborate, and are funded by the Public Affairs Office within the BSB.

## Your Welcome

*Never bend your head. Always hold it high.  
Look the world straight in the face.  
--- Helen Keller*

Hopefully, you will be officially welcomed into the community through a tea, coffee, or other social function. This is a time-honored military tradition, but it also is a way to get to meet a lot of people very quickly, at least superficially. Even if you don't have a lot of time to converse with each person, you will recognize their face when you see them again, and they will find out a little bit about you.

Your welcome will normally be hosted and planned by the BSB/Garrison XO's spouse. However, because the structure of each BSB/Garrison is different, and because the military presence isn't a large one, don't be offended if there is a non-traditional type of welcome, or maybe not even an official welcome at all. It doesn't mean anything toward you personally. It only means that, among the civilian world, some of these types of traditions are not so well understood. It might also mean that you will have to initiate your own entrance into the community, perhaps by hosting a "get-to-know-you" coffee at your home for the workers within the BSB or Garrison.

## VI. Good Information to Gather

*Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful.*

*--Samuel Johnson*

Your three-ring binder will be helpful in keeping necessary and nice-to-know information handy. Some of the sections of your notebook might be:

- Community Calendar – this should have all the events, dates, and points of contact of anything that will be occurring within the BSB/Garrison during a specified amount of time.
- Regulations – these will differ post-to-post. You might want to include regulations regarding:
  - Housing
  - Childcare
  - Pets
  - APO's/ Mailrooms (Note their differences)
  - Non-appropriated fund (NAF) vs. Appropriated funds (AF)
  - Garbage collection (these regulations may differ even between posts within one BSB, depending on the company servicing each post.)
- Policies:
  - Civilian misconduct
  - Curfew
  - School delay
  - Force protection
- Phone numbers:
  - social groups
  - community agencies
  - club rosters
- Relevant AFTB materials – AFTB offers some good information on communication skills, time management, conflict management, meeting management, problem solving, and dealing with the media.

- For Overseas commands, information pertinent to the Host nation such as:
  - The Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in Germany and similar policies that determine how the military community can operate within the host-nation.
  - Policies regarding Work Councils and local nationals.
- Agency brochures/newsletters – these will keep you up to date on what is happening with AAFES, the commissary, schools, etc.

## VII. Saying Goodbye

*A man has made at least a start on discovering the meaning of human life when he plants shade trees under which he knows full well he will never sit.*  
-- Elton Trueblood

Before you know it, two years will go by and you will find yourself preparing to say goodbye to the command that has taken up so much of your life. The reality of this often hits the day your spouse comes home and says that he's been contacted by the person slated to take his place. Do not be surprised if this causes you to experience a myriad of emotions. The first one may be surprise, even disbelief. The second may be a mixture of many things, including anger, sadness, jubilation, and even fear.

### The Emotions

*If you let yourself be absorbed completely, if you surrender completely to the moments as they pass, you live more richly those moments.*  
-- Anne Morrow Lindburgh

On one hand, you may feel great relief that you have reached the end because you're tired of the constant demands of this intense lifestyle. On the other hand, you may feel great sadness, even grief, because you will be saying goodbye to people and a community that has come to feel like your family. Also, you will be leaving a position that has given you visibility, the feeling of importance, and great opportunity to be involved within the military and surrounding civilian community. You may feel fear because you think you'll never have experiences of this type again, or you may be afraid that the next command team will do a better job than you and your spouse have done. You might even feel a little resentful of these people who are coming to take your place. It can also cause a great jolt, regardless of how you felt about your command time, when all of a

sudden, almost no one is interested in what you're saying or doing, just because your husband is no longer the commander. It is normal to feel some real internal conflict over the passing of this time of your lives. Probably the best thing you can do is to admit to the conflictive feelings you're having (at least to yourself), feel them until you don't feel them anymore, and then get started with the rest of your life. There will still be great things to come!

## Welcoming the New Command Team

*Character is what you are in the dark.*  
-- Dwight L. Moody

As soon as you know who will be replacing your spouse in command, call or e-mail his spouse. Find out what she wants to know and think about what she needs to know. Try to get her at least some basic information as soon as possible. Information to pass on might include:

- Calendar of events
- Social rosters
- Spouse rosters
- Chain of concern
- BSB/Garrison traditions for welcomes and farewells
- After-action reports for activities and events
- Newsletters/ relevant publications
- Standard operating procedures from any committees
- Lists of supplies belonging to BSB/Garrison and where they might be found
- Information regarding the roles of senior spouses
- BSB/Garrison agency rosters
- Community maps
- A Starburst manual (for German-based BSBs)

As the day of the change-of-command draws closer, you will be swept up in the accompanying activities. You will also be meeting the new command team.

Do as much as you can to ensure that the new command team is welcomed into the community. Meet them at the airport, if possible. Take flowers to their new home or hotel. Have them over for dinner. Tell them everything they need to know to ease their transition. Remember what it was like when you came,

and how much you didn't know. They are hungry for information. Especially, make sure they know everything they need to know regarding the change-of-command reception and other activities. Also, to the best of your abilities, make sure that a welcome reception is planned for the new command spouse.

## Try to Understand

*It is more important to understand the ground of your own behavior than to understand the motives of another.*

*-- Dag Hammarskjold*

In-coming commanders and their spouses often spend their first few days observing the community and getting a feel for things. One of the first things they might do is to focus on the things that they perceive as not working. They do not have the information or experience yet to know that often, countless efforts have been made toward fixing that particular problem. Therefore, you might hear them say that as soon as they are in command, they will "take care of that." It is hard to not be offended or hurt by this attitude. However, if you think back, you might remember feeling the same way yourselves. It is easy for all of us to think that we will save the world. It is only through experience that we find out it's not always an easy or even possible thing to do.

## Receiving Gifts

*Blessed are those who can give without remembering and take without forgetting.*

*-- Elizabeth Bibesco*

As your spouse's command comes to an end, your contributions will be acknowledged and you and your spouse will be honored in a variety of ways. Because of your position within the community, it is possible that you will be bestowed with many gifts, particularly if you are serving overseas. Be sure that you check regulations concerning gifts before you get to this stage. People do

not realize that there is a value limit placed on the gifts you may receive, and that your spouse can get into trouble if you or he accepts a gift or gifts that exceed that value. You may want to ask a friend to assist you in the receiving line after the change of command to make note of any gifts and who gave them. In Germany, especially, you'll receive various token gifts from local dignitaries; when everything is finished, you may not be able to remember who gave you which gift. Always send thank-you notes.

## **When it's Over**

*It is good to have an end to journey towards;  
But it is the journey that matters, in the end.  
-- Ursula K. Leguin*

When all is said and done, you will take your place at the change of command, and someone will present you with roses as a symbol of their gratitude for your efforts and experience. You and your spouse will once again stand in a long line and shake countless hands. Then, all of those people who once honored you will go to welcome the new command team, and you and your spouse will probably leave together, alone. Think about this ahead of time, and prepare yourself. Make some plans to get through that first day or two. Have the motor running and your bags packed, and go away with your spouse and/or family for a vacation or long weekend. Don't let your last moments be clouded by sadness and feelings of abandonment.

## VIII. Memories

*There is a kind of release that comes directly to those who have undergone an ordeal and who know, having survived it, that they are equal to all of life's occasions.*

*-- Lewis Mumford*

### The Good Ones

- At our post, the fire and emergency workers were contracted German firefighters. Every year, the BSB would host an appreciation event for them at the Post bowling alley, with several games of bowling combined with a fried chicken dinner with all the fixings. Besides the firefighters, the Oberbergermeister (area mayor) was also invited. At first, everyone bowled and remained very quiet, but my husband and I started clapping and cheering every time someone scored a strike or spare. Pretty soon, everyone was doing the same, and the Oberbergermeister and I started giving each other “high 5’s.” It is one of my favorite memories of the whole 2 years.
- We met the most wonderful people during my husband’s command. We saw so many go so far beyond what was expected or required of them, just for the good of the community. Actually, it was probably the finest group of people I’ve ever known in my life. It was hard to say goodbye to them.
- The first time we had a really good snowfall, my husband was conferring with the military police and school officials to determine whether conditions were bad enough to call off school. Therefore, the phone had been ringing all evening. It was a little surprising, though, when our 12-year old neighbor boy called and said, “I was just calling to see whether you were going to call off school.” We had to laugh the next day, too, when school was called off, to realize that my husband had become the hero of the neighborhood children because of his decision.
- During the summer months, we often had official invitations to attend the opening ceremonies of the wine fests celebrated by the many German towns surrounding our BSB. We were always received very warmly and treated as

honored guests. We often were privileged to see rooms normally not opened to tourists, in buildings hundreds of years old. The architecture, costumes, and food were fantastic. We made it a point to return to these winefests one or two days later, unofficially. The look of surprise and delight from the town mayors and officials when we would come back on our own is a memory I will always treasure.

- At one winefest, we were invited to an upper room of an old house on the square to sample the very special secret recipe homemade schnapps of the town mayor. We have warm memories of the comradery of that occasion and the friendships that continued afterwards.
- One of the German ladies in the community hosted a German/American advent “tea” each Christmas season. Another would host a summer “tea”. They both served a variety of delicious homemade cakes, and set beautiful tables for the events. The friendships formed with these ladies of the German community, many of whom can remember what it was like to be a child during WWII, are dear to my heart.
- Each fall, grapes are harvested for wine in the surrounding vineyards. One local farmer invited our German/American group to come out and help harvest his grapes. We all rode a tractor out to the fields, and cut grape bunches. We then would pour our buckets of grapes into a huge basket that one of the local workers carried on his back. He in turn poured his basketful into the wagon pulled by the tractor. This was cold and dirty work. One of the workers had the job of carrying a tray of schnapps up and down the rows for anyone that wanted to “warm up”. When the wagon was full, we all rode back through town waving branches of grape leaves. We were then invited to a delicious hot lunch prepared by the farmer’s wife, and were taken on a tour of the wine cellar to see how the grapes we had just harvested were being crushed, and to watch the process of turning the grapes into wine. I felt privileged to be able to participate in such an experience.

## The Not So Good Ones

*It is in the whole process of meeting and solving problems that life has meaning. Problems are the cutting edge that distinguishes between success and failure. Problems call forth our courage and our wisdom; indeed, they create our courage and our wisdom. It is only because of problems that we grow mentally and spiritually. It is through the pain of confronting and resolving problems that we learn.*

*-- M. Scott Peck*

- The decision on whether or not to close or delay school opening due to weather conditions has to be made BEFORE the buses are sent out to make their morning rounds. This is often between 5AM and 6AM. On one particular morning, the MPs called in and informed my husband that although it was snowing lightly, the roads were clear. The decision was made to start school on time and the buses were sent out. In the meantime, it began to snow heavily in the outlying hills where a lot of Americans resided. Children in these outlying communities were left standing in the cold at their bus stops, waiting for greatly delayed buses. Although school started on time, many students were late and classes were not able to go as planned. The BSB received a record number of calls that morning from irate mothers. For months afterward, people who were still miffed would approach me wondering why school was not delayed that day when the decision to do so was so "obviously easy" to make!
- I was at a function that involved senior leaders and German dignitaries. I made a comment to one of the senior wives that pertained to some information regarding contract negotiations with the Germans that was not for public dissemination. When the senior wife began questioning me, I realized that I had overstepped my boundaries and referred her to our PAO. The PAO, knowing that the information was privileged, would not discuss the issue with her. The senior wife berated the PAO in front of all the German dignitaries and army senior leaders present. Her relationship with our PAO was strained for the rest of the tour, and all because I brought up information that I shouldn't have. I learned the hard way to keep my mouth shut.
- Someone whom I trusted once informed me of some things that a civilian worker had said at a meeting regarding his boss and ultimately, my husband. It was a very derogatory remark, and based on total falsehoods. It was also

supposedly said in front of a great number of people. I knew there had been previous problems with this employee, so I repeated the story to my husband, and he pursued it. Unfortunately, we found out that, not only was it not true in this case, but also that the person who had told me had done so with some malicious intent of her own. Apparently there was some bad blood between her and the employee, and she had seen an opportunity to do something about it. When asked to back up her statement, she tried to make it appear that I had totally misunderstood her. I hadn't. Both my husband and I learned a hard lesson through this, but a good one. I never again trusted what people told me unless I had proof, and I was very careful thereafter not to speak for those who would not speak for themselves.

- On occasion, spouses in the community with whom I had a friendly relationship were referred to the BSB for violating community or German laws (speeding tickets, home-based business issues etc). Often it fell to my husband to decide the outcome and to enforce any ensuing consequences. This type of situation could be awkward, as some of these spouses felt that exceptions to policy should be made based on friendship.
- In an organization as large as a BSB, there will inevitably be someone who will cause grief. We had one directorate who was viewed as a tyrant, a captain who seemed to take pleasure in undermining her subordinates, and several civilians who were not able to do their jobs effectively. The repercussions of their actions were chronic issues throughout the entire two years.
- The commander who served before my husband said that he was called in the middle of the night by the Installation Commander, who had stepped in some dog droppings on his way home. Minutes later, this BSB commander and his Command Sergeant Major were outside in the Installation Commander's yard with flashlights, cleaning up the doggie doo.

## The Unbelievable Ones

*We are all here for a spell, get all the good laughs you can.  
-- Will Rogers*

- One day we had a General's wife visiting us. The main reason she was there was to listen to "quality of life" issues. Therefore, we had gathered several young wives for a luncheon at the community club. As the afternoon went on, several issues were stated, and we all felt satisfied with the event. My husband couldn't be there that day, so his XO was there, representing the BSB. As every issue was brought up, he busily scribbled away, recording them so that the BSB could fix what it could on the local level.

To end up the session, the senior lady there asked if there was anything else about which the ladies wanted something done. One of the young wives responded, "Yes, I'd like for you to do something about breast feeding." I was watching the XO at this point. Without thinking, he began to add the issue to his list. Then, I guess it suddenly dawned on him what he had just written because he stopped, started, stopped again, turned about 12 shades of red, and finally put his pencil down.

I did my best to control my laughter, and I could see others around me doing the same. The young lady had actually meant that she wanted the Army community as a whole to become more understanding of mothers who were breast-feeding their children and she wanted the General's wife to advocate on their behalf. However, for a long time, it was a joke between the XO and me that he had put on the list that the BSB needed to do something about breast-feeding. We had known for a long time that people expected the BSB to fix just about everything for them, but breast-feeding was a new topic for us all.

- My husband, the garrison commander, began to receive many complaints that the post bugle system was old and barely audible and the folks wanted to hear reveille, the half-dozen daily calls, and taps - like the old army. He spent \$13,000 on a state of the art system. He and the Sergeant Major tested the new system from different points on post and decided they had the switches exactly right. After the first few days they got e-mails and calls from the quarters near the speakers that it was way too loud. They answered, "No problem we will consider turning it down." The residents at the edge of post

kept writing that it was not loud enough, to which they replied, "No problem we will consider turning it up." The folks in the middle said, "Love the new system." For about a week the bugle system was a hot topic of conversation between the ones near, far, and in the middle. Pretty soon everybody settled down and seemed to believe the volume was finally satisfactory. The truth is my husband and the Sergeant Major never actually changed the volume after they knew they had it just right.

- Being the spouse of a BSB Commander had its ups and downs. It had a mix of happy, sad, and very interesting stories. I learned to keep a good perspective and sense of humor when those opportunities presented themselves. Let me share my favorite experience with you so that you can look upon this new assignment with that same sense of humor that I left with.

We had a very difficult person who resided in our community. Every directorate in the BSB knew who she was because they all had the opportunity to converse with her on the phone to fix a problem! Her neighbors also found it difficult to share a stairwell with her. The problems only increased as her husband deployed to Kosovo.

It was my husband's policy to listen and try to fix problems if they truly existed. One day I went to visit with my husband in his office. He shared a story that had been phoned in by one of this person's neighbors: Unfortunately this person's dog had died. She was despondent to think her husband would not have the chance to say good-bye to the dog. To solve this dilemma, she just put the DEAD DOG IN THE FREEZER! My husband called JAG to see what he could legally do about this situation and found out that what she had done was legal in Germany. We could only laugh!

I don't know that you'll have this kind of experience during your watch, but I can promise that you will have experiences in which you will just have to laugh! Enjoy this experience. It will be the most interesting and rewarding of your Army career!

## IX. Insights and Advice

*Last, but by no means least, courage – moral courage, the courage of one's convictions, the courage to see things through. The world is in a constant conspiracy against the brave. It's the age-old struggle. The roar of the crowd on one side and the voice of your conscience on the other.*

*-- Douglas McArthur*

- One of the most important roles you'll play in the community is that of cheerleading – for your husband and his command team, and for the workers within the community, including volunteers. When there's a difficult decision to be made, you may be your husband's only cheerleader, and he'll need to know that you support him. Likewise, our community agencies are all trying to accomplish as much or more than they were accomplishing 10-15 years ago, but they're doing it with far less money and much-reduced staffs. Seek every opportunity to let them know that you see how hard they're working, that you appreciate their efforts, and that you're passing your observations on to your husband.
- Encourage your husband to schedule leave as one of his first priorities, realizing that he still might not get to take it. The BSB Commander's and his wife's calendar will fill up with a thousand events, some of them important to the community as a whole, and some of them only a "command performance" time where a small group just wants him to appear, or maybe shake hands. The point is that if you wait for a good time to take leave, you'll never take it. If you don't protect some time first for your and your family's rest and recharging, it won't happen. The XO can go shake hands. Let him do it sometimes and you guys go to Garmish or the Poconos! The BSB Command is, without a doubt, one of the most stressful and draining jobs in the army (and some of the other senior leaders don't even realize it) and you need to force yourself to take time off so that you can be fresh for the challenge. Also, when you take leave, make sure that you take it somewhere far away, because the phone will continue to ring if you stay home!
- It's a hard fact to realize, but at some point, I think we all come to the realization that we are different from the other commanders and their spouses. The first time it hits most of us is when you hear them say something about "They"..... and you realize they're talking about your husband: "If they were doing their job, we would have a better PX.... If they cared the lunch program at the school would be better.... I think they want the club to fail so they can shut it down... They live up on snob hill, what do

THEY know about housing.” These are statements I’ve actually heard. Sometimes it comes from community members, but too often it comes from senior leaders and their families – sometimes they say it because it’s easy for all of us to fall into the habit of complaining and they don’t realize that it is really your husband who is responsible for all these things. Sometimes, though, they mean it, and it can be much more difficult to take when it’s from people who should know better.

- Likewise, there are a lot of senior leaders out there who don’t understand a BSB command, and some who don’t like it or believe in it. Some of the other commanders actually regard it as a lesser job than theirs, and will treat your husband accordingly. Some of them resent the amount of attention the BSB commander gets in comparison with them. The BSB Commander and his spouse will often be invited to functions and activities that only the CG and Chief of Staff, and perhaps Brigade Commanders and spouses are invited to. Sometimes the others don’t like that. On the other hand, those who do understand it have great respect for the position and will tell you that.

*No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.  
-- Eleanor Roosevelt*

- It is important, particularly for the spouse, to choose your activities carefully. I would encourage you not to commit yourself to a leadership position at least for the first 3-4 months, until you get a feel for the demands that will be made on your time, unless there’s something that you really want to do. Remember that often, your day is kicking into phase 2 at 5:00 p.m. as you’re on your way out to a function or town-hall meeting or other BSB-supported activity as everyone else’s day is coming to an end. There will be days when you’ll be out at 8:00 am and won’t be back until 10:00 that evening, except to change clothes twice! Others will be having family dinners while you’re feeding your kids at the club, because that belongs to the BSB and no one else will support it if you don’t. The point is, protect your time, and that of your family’s as much as possible, because if you don’t, no one else will. It’s easy to get swallowed up with commitments before you get a feel for what is important and what isn’t.
- Choose carefully what you want to be involved with in the community, but also choose some activities that are just for you. It can be difficult to develop friendships within the community because nearly everyone, except tactical

military personnel, will work for your husband, and they don't know how to cross that line, even when they want to. Other command spouses sometimes also don't quite know what to do with you, because your husband isn't going to the field and doing the things their husbands are doing. For this reason, it can be hard to get relationships started – plus, they also are caught up in the demands of their own positions and don't have a lot of free time. So, find things that provide more neutral ground, and make sure that everyone there knows that's what it is – chapel, PWOC or CWOC, quilting or stitching groups, book groups, bunko groups – find a couple of things that are just fun to do, that feed you and your spirit, and that put you with other women where you can just be you.

- Remember, and help your husband to remember, that you both are in a position that, by nature, is conflictive. On one hand, your husband is the overseer for the community. He has to listen to and respond to the needs of community members, including their complaints and frustrations about those who work for community agencies. However, he also has to look out for the rights and fairness of treatment toward those community agency workers. There are some within every community and within every agency, whether military, civil service, DODDS, AAFES, or Commissary who don't do their job as well as they should. However, there are also many military and family members who are interested only in what they want when they want it, and they are not interested in whether "it" is right, possible, or in the best interests of other people in the community. Someone once said that Americans, in general, want it perfect, they want it now, and they want it to be free. You have to always be aware that, when you hear a complaint against a worker within the community, that maybe there's another side to the story.
- Actually, there is always another side to the story. It's a good thing to remember and to find out the other side before making a judgment.
- Don't be surprised when, within community agencies, the workers who cause the most trouble and do the worst jobs also have the best lawyers and know all their rights backwards and forwards. They will provide the least good to the community and take up the most of your husband's time.

*People who fight fire with fire usually end up with ashes.  
-- Abigail Van Buren*

- Remember that nothing is ever as easy as it seems. For example, your spouse will be under pressure from community members during snowy days to close the schools. Community members do not often realize that there are

serious ramifications that go along with that decision – enormous amounts of money that will be spent to pay teachers that aren't teaching, childcare arrangements that must be made for soldiers' children and the children of dual-working parents, and limited childcare facilities. They also may not realize that the decision is not made arbitrarily, but is based on the conditions of the road. Community members will also complain about commissary hours, not realizing that, by regulation, commissaries have a restricted number of hours they can be open, based on the size of the community they are serving. Therefore, if they extend their hours on one day to please one group of community members, they have to reduce them on another day, which will cause a different segment of the population to complain.

- Don't forget that, for your Command Sergeant Major and his wife, this assignment may be like their "command time" too. Include the CSM's wife in your activities as much as you can. Share your responsibilities with her to the extent that she is willing. If you show her the respect she deserves, others will too.
- My husband and I were pre-positioned within the community for several months before he took command. Although it provided him an opportunity to get to know the workings of community, it also created a very difficult climate for both us and the acting commander. Everyone knows who the incoming commander is, and therefore is already seeking his or her approval and recognition. This can have the effect of turning the current commander into a sort of lame duck, and can put the incoming commander into a position of creating conflict, even if he or she does not mean to do that. It also causes a division of loyalty among the staff and employees within the BSB/Garrison that can be disruptive for the entire organization.
- My husband and I were left in the community after he gave up command. That, too, was difficult for both the incoming commander and us. It was difficult for us because we were still there, but we had to self-impose a much-reduced involvement within the community, to give the new guy a chance to assume his position. He and his wife were faced with doing everything in our shadow, so it took them much longer to get established. Community members and employees were conflicted because, since we were still there, they felt that they owed loyalty to us. Yet my husband was no longer their commander, so they also had to be loyal to the new guy. It was difficult for us to watch as he made changes to things that we knew had worked very well, and I'm sure it was difficult for him to feel as if he were accomplishing as much as he wanted, because of the divided loyalties. I think it is always better to make a clean break when a commander gives up command. He and his family should leave the community if at all possible.

- Keep in mind that you will never be able to imagine or anticipate all the things that people can come up with to complain about or want or do. This is one case where the sky really is the limit. Also, NEVER say never.

*Everything is funny as long as it is happening to someone else.  
-- Will Rogers*

- A BSB/Garrison Commander and his spouse will often find themselves in rather elite social situations, and enjoying the company of persons with higher positions and greater status than they. Without care, this could lead one to have feelings of false grandeur or importance. Don't lose sight of who you are and with whom you should be most concerned; that is, those soldiers and families who fall under your spouse's command.

*Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.  
-- Abraham Lincoln*

- Life in the fast lane begins at your change-of-command. The thought that I could ease into it was naïve.
- The Garrison community is so vast that it can be completely overwhelming. Trying to learn faces and names is a daunting task. There are so many civilian workers, soldiers, commanders and their spouses, and family members. It will take months to get to know only a portion of them. Try to learn a few people's names each day. Begin entertaining or hosting informal get-togethers quickly because this is a great way to get to know who is who.
- Everyone comes into these commands either scared to death, or with great enthusiasm, or maybe both. We all want to make things better and think that our ideas might work. However, it is wise to wait before you make changes. Even when things aren't as perfect as you'd like, people get comfortable with their present situation. Change things slowly, if you can. Otherwise, if it's not broken, maybe you don't need to fix it.

- One of the biggest challenges my husband faced was in dealing with the reality of the club system and our community's perception of what it ought to be. Things have changed a lot over the last several years. Clubs are no longer supported with Army funds; instead, they must be self-supporting. At the same time, the use of clubs by the Army community members is way down – officer families, particularly, don't drink to the degree that they used to, and often, they don't want to go to the club after work. Because of the high op-tempo, they just want to go home. Plus, there is so much competition now by restaurant chains, and so many restrictions within which the club system must work, it is nearly impossible for clubs to even cover their own costs, much less make money. Often, though, community members think the club ought to be open all the time, just in case they should want to go there, even if they never do. They don't understand that, even if they eat there every day, the proceeds earned from their food do not even come close to covering the cost of the labor and utilities, and other operating costs that were required to fix that food. It was a never-ending battle in a no-win war.
- Remember that every BSB command team comes into the job thinking that they will change the world, whether it's by cleaning up the garbage, or cleaning up the schools. That's a good thing. Probably every one of us thinks that we will do the job much, much better than the person before us, and that can be a good thing too. However, keep in mind that, when you're new in the job, you haven't encountered the endless red-tape, conflicts of interest, bureaucracy, lack of funds, and indecision from above that the last guy has spent two years wrestling. When listening to others expressing negative opinions about the last commander, remember that they might have only seen a little part of the big picture the previous commander saw. When tempted to stomp all over his or her footprints, take a breath and remember that you haven't walked that road yet, and be kind instead. Give your predecessor the benefit of the doubt unless you know the true facts.
- Enjoy this time. It's sort of like being king and queen for a small point in history. You will have probably the greatest opportunity in your lives to really serve others and make a positive difference in their lives. Make the most of it.

*The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.*

*Albert Schweitzer*

## Appendix A. Structures Within the Command

### Types of Commands

These are some of the commands you might be hearing about if you are within a BSB/Garrison:

Installation Commander: This is usually the senior commander within the installation. This commander has overall responsibility for the military community and personnel on the installation. Commanders of depots, arsenals, proving grounds, and Army divisions and corps are good examples of installation commanders. These commanders must consider that in most cases, they will deploy when their soldiers deploy. Therefore, BSB/Garrison commanders provide continuity and quality of care to the community, especially during deployments.

Garrison Commander: Garrison Commanders are responsible for day-to-day operations within the community. They are responsible for the comprehensive planning necessary to achieve and maintain quality living and working conditions for all military community members. They are also responsible for supporting local mobilization plans. During deployments, they remain at the installation to receive follow-on reserve components. They also provide continuity and quality of care to family and civilian members left behind, and sustain other critical post missions.

Area Support Group (ASG) Commander: This is comparable to the Brigade level commander in tactical units, and is the higher link in the chain of command above BSB Commanders overseas. Area Support Group Commanders command multiple BSB's over a wide geographic area. They provide guidance, resources, and support to the BSB's under them.

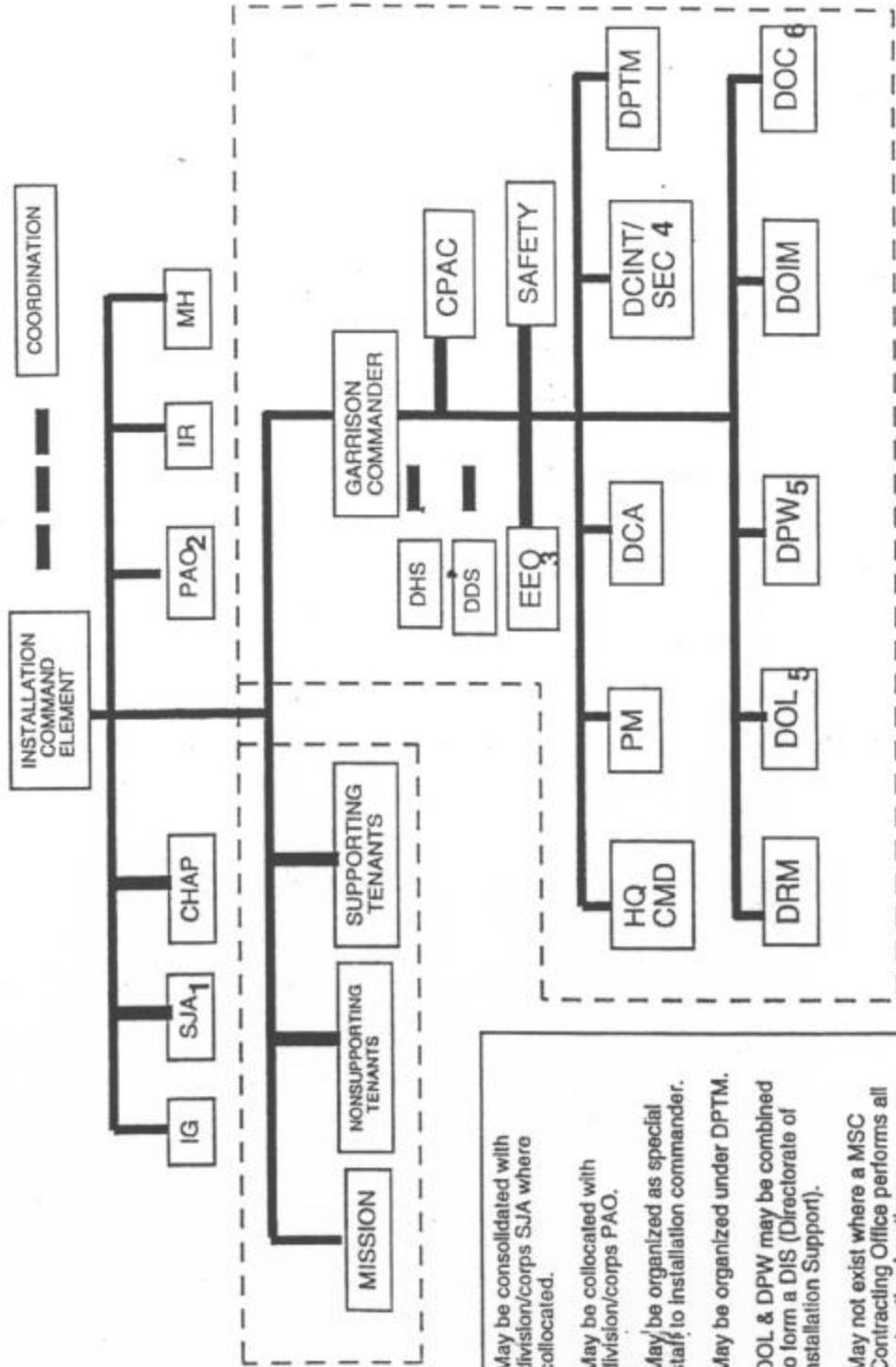
Base Support Battalion (BSB) Commander: This is the overseas counterpart to the Garrison Commander. BSB's operate typically under the command of an ASG. Their job description is predominantly the same as that of the Garrison Commander.

Area Support Team (AST) Directors. These are the commanders of subinstallations within the BSB or ASG overseas. ASTs are generally 20-80 kilometers away from their parent BSB. ASTs may be run by a Major, a Captain, or a civilian in some cases.



# Sample Installation Organization Chart

Note: Installation organizations vary ... this is a baseline

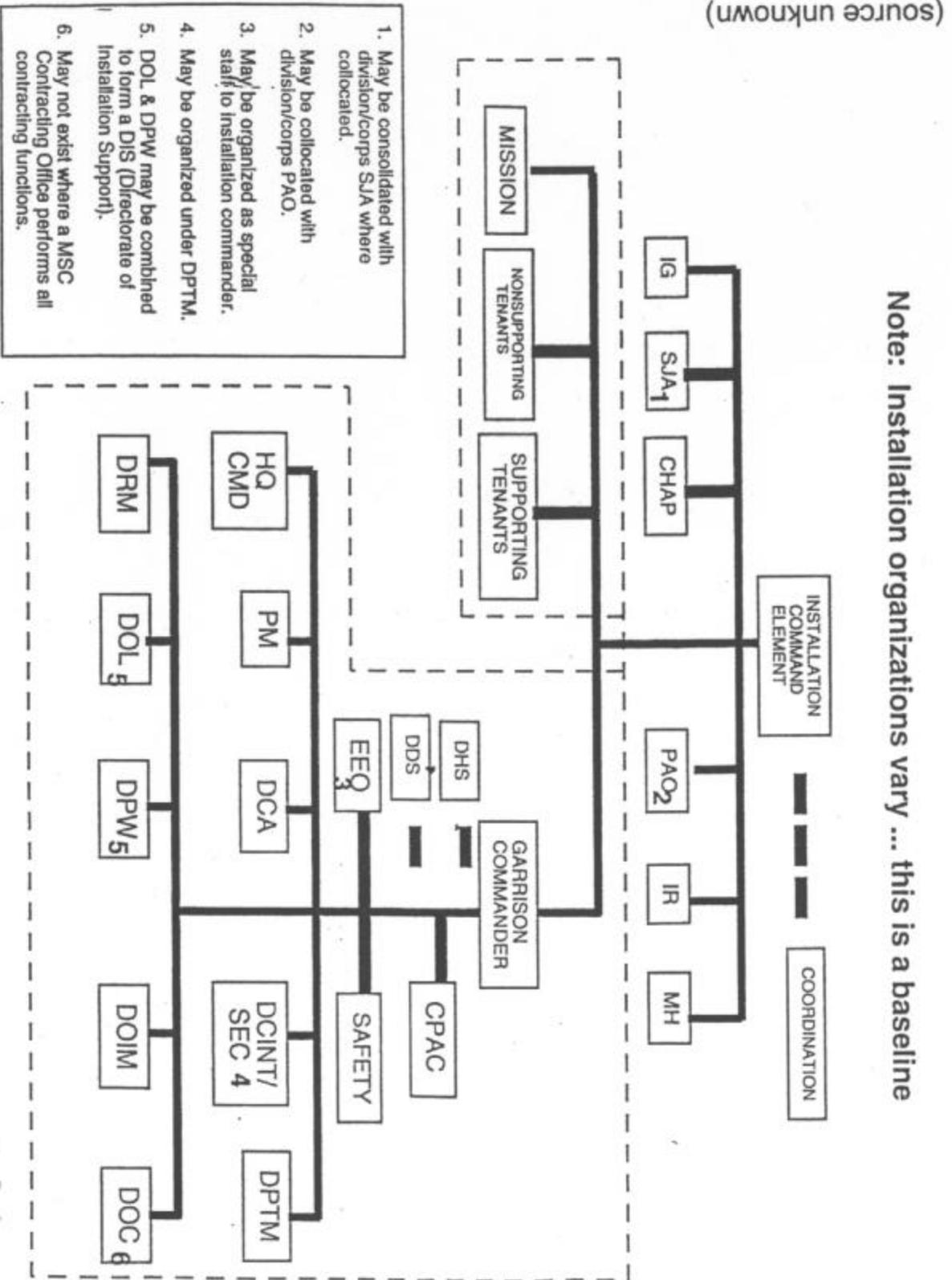


1. May be consolidated with division/corps SJA where collocated.
2. May be collocated with division/corps PAO.
3. May be organized as special staff to installation commander.
4. May be organized under DPTM.
5. DOL & DPW may be combined to form a DIS (Directorate of Installation Support).
6. May not exist where a MSC Contracting Office performs all contracting functions.

(source unknown)



Sample Installation Organization Chart







## Appendix B. Frequently Used BSB/Garrison Acronyms

AAFES Army and Air Force Exchange Services	DCSPER Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel
ACAP Army Career and Alumni Program	DDP Delta Dental Plan
ACOE Army Communities of Excellence	DeCa/DECA Defense Commissary Agency
ACS Army Community Service	DEERS Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System
AD Active Duty	DEH Director of Engineering and Housing
ADJ Adjutant	DENTAC Dental Activity
AER Army Emergency Relief	DEROS Date of Estimated Return from Overseas
AF Appropriated Funds	DFAS Defense Finance and Accounting System
AFAP Army Family Action Plan	DOD Department of Defense
AFN Armed Forces Network	DODDS Department of Defense Dependents Schools
AFRTS Armed Forces Radio and Television Network	DOIM Director of Information Management
AFTB Army Family Team Building	DOL Director of Logistics
AG Adjutant General	DOR Date of Rank
AMEDCOM Army Medical Command	DPCA Director of Personnel and Community Activities
APF Appropriated Funds	DPP Deferred Payment Plan
APO Army Postal Office	DPW Director of Public Works
AUSA Association of the United States Army	DSN Defense Switched Network (current term for Autovon)
BAQ Basic Allowance for Quarters	EFMP Exceptional Family Member Program
BAS Basic Allowance for Subsistence	GO General Officer
BDE Brigade	GRHP Government Rental Housing Program
BDU Battle Dress Uniform	HAZMAT Hazardous materials
BN Battalion	HHC Headquarters and Headquarters Company
CDR Commander	HN Host Nation
CDS Child Development Center	HOR Home of Record
CG Commanding General	HQ Headquarters
CHAMPUS Civilian Health and Medical Program for the Uniformed Services	HRO Housing Referral Office
CID Criminal Investigation Division	ID Identification
CINC Commander in Chief	IG Inspector General
CO/co Commanding Officer/ company	ISO Installation Safety Office
COB Close of Business	ITO Installation Transportation Office
COLA Cost of Living Allowance	ITR Information, Ticketing, and Registration
CONUS Continental United States	ITT Information, Tours, and Travel
CPO Civilian Personnel Office	IVC Installation Volunteer Coordinator
Cs/ C of S Chief of Staff	JAG Judge Advocate General
CSA Chief of Staff, Army	
CWOC Catholic Women of the Chapel	
DA Department of the Army	
DAC Department of the Army Civilian	
DCA Director of Community Affairs	
DCSOPS Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans	

LES Leave and Earning Statement  
 MACOM Major Army Command  
 MASH Mobil Army Surgical Hospital  
 MEDCOM Medical Command  
 MEDDAC Medical Department Activity  
 MI Military Intelligence  
 MILPO Military Personnel Office  
 MP Military Police  
 MWR Morale, Welfare, and Recreation  
 NAF Nonappropriated funds (generated locally)  
 NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization  
 NCO Noncommissioned Officer  
 NCOA Noncommissioned Officers Association  
 NCOER Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Report  
 NCOIC Noncommissioned Officer in Charge  
 NCOWC Noncommissioned Officers' Wives Club  
 NEO Noncombatant Evacuation Operation  
 O Club Officers' Club  
 OCONUS Outside the Continental United States  
 OCWC Officers' and Civilians Wives' Club  
 ODCSOPS Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations  
 ODEP Office of the Director of Environmental Programs  
 OER Officer Evaluation Report  
 OH Occupational Health  
 OPSEC Operations Security  
 OSHA Occupational Safety and Health Administration  
 OWC Officers' Wives Club  
 PAO Public Affairs Officer  
 PCS Permanent Change of Station  
 PERSCOM Personnel Command  
 PM Provost Marshal Office  
 POA Power of Attorney  
 POC Point of contact  
 POV Privately owned vehicle  
 PWOC Protestant Women of the Chapel  
 PX Post Exchange  
 QM Quartermaster  
 QOL Quality of Life  
 QTRS Quarters (living area)  
 RA Regular Army  
 RD Rear Detachment  
 RDC Rear Detachment Commander  
 RDF Rapid Deployment Force  
 RFO Request for Orders  
 RIF Reduction in Force  
 ROTC Reserve Officer Training Corps  
 SDO Staff Duty Officer  
 SIDPERS Standard Installation/ Division Personnel Reporting System  
 SJA Staff Judge Advocate  
 SOP Standard Operating Procedure  
 STC Senior Tactical Commander  
 TDY Temporary duty  
 TLA Temporary Living Allowance  
 TMP Transportation Motor Pool  
 TRADOC Training and Doctrine Command  
 USAMEDCOM US Army Medical Command  
 USAR United States Army Reserve  
 USAREUR United States Army, Europe  
 USO United Services Organization  
 VA Department of Veterans Affairs  
 VHA Variable Housing Allowance  
 WO Warrant Officer  
 XO Executive Officer

## **Appendix C. Recommended for Personal Library**

Service Etiquette by Oretha D. Swartz – the “ Bible” of military protocol  
C 1988 by the United States Naval Institute, Annapolis, MD

Protocol by Mary Jane McCaffree and Pauline Innis – the Complete Handbook of  
Diplomatic, Official, and Social Usage; C 1989 by M.J. McCaffree and P. Innis

The Army Wife Handbook by Anne Crossley and Carol A. Keller  
C 1993 by ABI Press

StarBurst A manual for ASG and BSB spouses OCONUS. Current command  
spouses overseas should provide these for incoming command spouses.

AFTB resources

## **Appendix D. Basic Army Etiquette**

### **Receiving Lines**

Standing in a receiving line. As the command team, you will stand on the red carpet in front of the flags. During the change-of-command reception or farewell, your children may stand next to you. The XO or PAO will assume the role of Adjutant or Aide, and will introduce the guests to you. The Adjutant/Aide position will normally come first, then the commander, followed by his spouse, and then the children, unless otherwise specified.

Going through a receiving line. Remember that you do not shake hands with the Adjutant or Aide. The spouse will precede the commander.

### **Command Sergeant Major**

During ceremonies, the Command Sergeant Major will sit immediately next to or behind the commander.

### **Other Etiquette**

The AFTB 1.01 Military Terms, Acronyms, Customs and Courtesies class is a great resource for information on how to work within Army protocol. So is the PAO.

## **Appendix E. MWR Funding**

MWR funds come from two major sources: Appropriated Funds and Nonappropriated Funds. A brief explanation follows:

### **Appropriated Funds (APF)**

Appropriated Funds come from our taxes. They are called “appropriated funds” because Congress allocates them for specific purposes, and there are a variety of restrictions that apply to how they can be used. APF provide mission-sustaining activities such as sports and libraries, and can also be used for some community support activities such as arts and crafts and child development.

### **Nonappropriated Funds (NAF)**

Nonappropriated Funds are generated from soldiers, civilians, and family through support of the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation facilities, the PX, and the travel concessions. NAF are used only for MWR purposes, with few exceptions. NAF funds revenue generating programs such as clubs and golf, as well as some specified community support activities. NAF cannot be used where APF are authorized and available.

Refer to AR 215-1, MWR Activities and NAF Instrumentalities for more information.

## **Appendix F. Just for Fun Quotes We Didn't Use**

### **Before Your Command:**

All hope abandon, ye who enter here! -- Dante

### **During Your Command:**

There sighs, lamentations and loud wailings resounded through the starless air, so that at first it made me weep; strange tongues, horrible language, words of pain, tones of anger, voices loud and hoarse, and with these the sound of hands, made a tumult which is whirling through that air forever dark, as sand eddies in a whirlwind. – Dante

This miserable state is borne by the wretched souls of those who lived without disgrace and without praise. – Dante

Necessity brings him here, not pleasure – Dante

### **After Your Command:**

And as he, who with laboring breath has escaped from the deep to the shore, turns to the perilous waters and gazes. – Dante

Quoth the raven, "Nevermore." -- Edgar Allen Poe