**14934, Stephen Soucy**

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the first, First Sergeant of this company I am honored to be asked to speak for this beginning Dining In for the 488th Military Police (MP) Company, 286 Combat Support Battalion, 120TH regional Support Group. I’m proud to have served with this company.

I’d like to welcome our Company Commander 03 Captain Frederick Bondole, along with Brigade Commander O6 – Colonel Diane Dunn, the Senior MP in the state O5 – Lieutenant Colonel Jon M. Cookson and Military Police O6, Colonel from Massachusetts National Guard to issue an MP award. *(If only one of these is present delete the others)*

I have been invited as a guest speaker because I was the first, First Sergeant from JAN 2008 to JUN 2010 and stood the company up from a platoon. This is our first such event and hope to continue the tradition as we believe it will add to the company’s sense of pride and comradery. I’m proud to say this unit is already extremely dedicated and disciplined. Their reputation is well known and other companies see them as an example to follow.

Serving in this particular assignment was the defining position in my twenty-two year career. My commanders gave me latitude to train, to coach, to counsel, and to mentor a fledgling company. It was a great learning experience for me and cemented many of my methods and procedures over the remainder of my career. For that I will always be thankful. It was also the defining position of many of the men who served under me when I was the First Sergeant. They were good soldiers who were ready to learn and apply what they learned and it has served them well as they moved on in their military careers.

The Commander and I at the time received numerous comments on the discipline and motivation displayed by our company, no matter what adversity we faced. Our first Annual Training event was in the Black Hills of South Dakota. The Commander and I were able to join the unit to fly via Air Force KC-135s, in full gear, just as if we were headed out on deployment, while the rest of the Battalion flew commercial in civilian clothes. The men ate it up. They were sure that us “old men” were too soft from sitting at a desk and would need their help. But, it was a real morale booster for them to see that their commanders could do whatever they asked of them without any special treatment. That didn’t stop them from razzing us at the beginning and silently taking bets that we wouldn’t make it the whole way in full gear. We did.

It was definitely a challenge for us as we built this company. We learned how to do things with great creativity and resourcefulness. We were always short on Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs), and I was always in heated discussions with higher headquarters because I wanted to groom our NCOs from scratch, one by one – from within the ranks. Over time we managed to accomplish that for the most part. Some of those junior NCOs are now senior NCOs leading the company. To those serving who are younger, that should let you know that if you are planning any pranks, think again. Your NCO’s were in your shoes at one time. They have not only thought of what you are planning; they perfected it and you won’t get away with anything with. You’ll have to be much more inventive if you want to have that kind of fun now.

Obtaining necessary equipment was also a challenge. Equipment arrived slowly so our NCOs became very resourceful and used whatever they had at their disposal to train Soldiers on various warrior tasks. Anything was fair game to use as weapons, even if it was brooms and mops. Anything was fair game to use as a hiding place during war games, even if it was “declaring” a safe zone where a person could hide and the other side wasn’t allowed to look, in place of actually having a hidden zone. We did what was necessary to use our actual surroundings, which is what we’d have to do in a real war situation.

Our drill weekends were packed with training. While most units did the typical 0700-1500 Saturday and Sunday, we would head out to a local training area early Saturday and come back to the ‘house’ late at night or early the next morning if we trained through the night. We handled all admin activities and cleanup Sunday mornings and get the Soldiers out a bit early on Sunday. All our guys appreciated the down time they got before getting back to routine Monday morning.

These became strong traditions that we built over time and that developed long roots, a strong work and training ethic that stands today. We built a close relationship with the Maine State Police Academy and the troopers that run the Academy. It’s these type of traditions that build a company that is strong, steady and dependable. It’s these type of traditions that builds a kinship or brotherhood that continues even as the roster changes over time and soldiers move on to other assignments. You don’t forget this type of relationship in the military. Strong relationships are important when you’re in the military. You have to depend upon those you serve with for your life sometimes and these activities taught us who we could trust along with their individual strengths and challenges. That knowledge helped us all to be better soldiers.

Our second Annual Training event was a joint effort with the Police Academy. We were successful in getting all NCOs and Officers qualified on both O/C spray and Tasers, and all junior Soldiers qualified with O/C spray and baton operations. Then we conducted a multi-day exercise dealing with riots etc. Joint training such as this helps us with domestic assignments. It helps us to know who we can work with in civilian law enforcement and helps us to know how to work with them in times of natural disasters or other emergencies.

I feel like we are the best Military Police unit in existence and foresee greater things in the future for this group. Good luck to all of you and thank you for inviting me to speak.