

# Facing the Board

*Preparation, self-confidence and good military bearing are the keys to success when going before a promotion board.*

Story by SSgt. T.K. Gilmore  
Photos by SFC Elroy Garcia

**Y**OUR collar suddenly feels like a noose around your neck; your Class A jacket like a second skin. It's tough to swallow, tough to breathe.

You're perspiring madly, and your hands start shaking. You wonder if you'll even make it through the initial salute.

Facts, figures and questions all swim around in your head, so muddled that you're certain you'll draw a total blank. Panic sets in.

Facing a board doesn't have to be a negative experience, according to SSgt. Prescott Griggs, a military police platoon sergeant assigned to the 21st Theater Army Area Command's 230th MP Company in Germany.

If you're self-confident and maintain your military bearing, you'll get through it, he said. "The board members are not there to humiliate you."

Soldiers who have the opportunity to go before a board should definitely do so, Griggs said, because it improves chances for promotion and selection for certain service schools.

"Appearing before boards separates you from your peers," he continued. "It brings you to the forefront of the chain of command."

But it's important to be prepared, remembering that you can't fool people, Griggs said. "You have to be genuine."

If board members wanted to know where Griggs was coming from, he didn't hesitate to tell them exactly. On leadership, he said, "I believe you should lead from the front. It's hard to tell soldiers to do something if you're not willing to do it yourself."

"And there's no secret to leadership. You have to apply what's in the manuals, and you have to love your soldiers and take care of them," he said.

One first sergeant who sits on promotion boards said, "I try to over-



**Doing well on boards is critical for specialists and sergeants, especially in overstrength MOSs.**

look the nervousness soldiers exhibit when they come in because it's a natural reaction, considering they're being rated by their peers. Board members pretty much expect it."

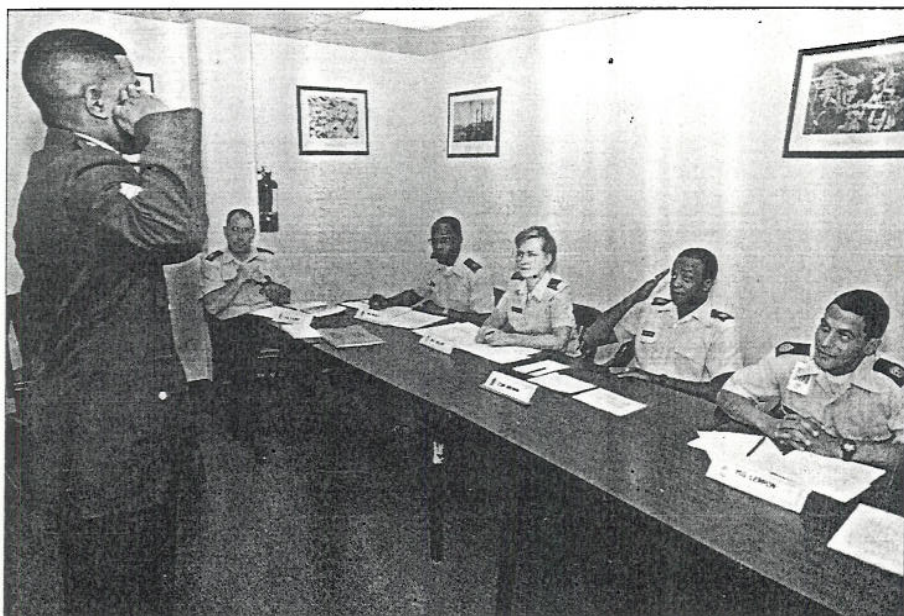
Instead, they try to figure out if soldiers actually know the subject matter they're being quizzed on or whether they've just memorized buzz words, he said.

Another board member said he looks at how well a soldier presents him- or herself before the board and answers the questions, from reporting in until being dismissed.

Specialists and sergeants can earn as many as 200 points for a flawless board performance under the semi-centralized promotion system, personnel officials said.

Points for military and civilian education, MOS and skill level tests, awards, physical fitness, marksmanship and commanders' evaluations are computed before the board appearance.

Your chain of command can provide more information about promotion and other boards. □



**Displaying self-confidence and good military bearing, as well as thorough preparation, can help make the board experience a positive one.**

SSgt. T.K. Gilmore is assigned to the 21st TAACOM PAO in Kaiserslautern, Germany. SFC Elroy Garcia, a former Soldiers staffer, is assigned to the MFO in the Signal.