

A STEP FORWARD

DISCHARGE



An idea found throughout the Army insists that on a certain day--the day of one's release from the service--one's entire life will reverse its field. The idea is extremely appealing.

If a scrap of paper known as a discharge held the power to so transform lives, it would easily be the most sought-after document in the world. If this piece of paper with a handful of words on it--none of them very important or moving words--could purge a man of his old habits and personality and ways, every last human being would enlist in the military merely to get that discharge.

Needless to say, the paper holds no such magic. A man will be exactly the same the day after he gets the discharge as he was the day before. This fanciful idea is an essentially destructive one. It gives the individual an absolutely false hope to cling to. Thus, far too many exiting servicemen--after two or three years in the Army--walk into civilian life expecting some sort of dream world.

Essentially the serviceman will face the same problems outside the Army as inside. Whether he fits will hinge mainly on his individual attitude and enterprise. A man, contrary to the cliché, does not "find his niche" in life --he makes it.

The discharge should not be viewed as a ticket to some never-never land but as what it is--a step forward into an increasingly competitive society that will not tolerate missteps or laxity any more than a first sergeant and hands out much stiffer punishment.

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