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**Officer's promotion incorporates friend from the past**

By Staff Sgt. Kelly Bridgwater  
ERMC Public Affairs

**Heidelberg, Germany** -- When Lt. Col. Robert B. Halliday III got promoted the event brought together family, fellow service members, friends and a colleague from his past; and a Soldier who had gone through the ranks with Halliday though the two didn't know one another until 20 years into their Army careers.

On Nov. 21 at the Europe Regional Medical Command (ERMC) Headquarters in Heidelberg, Germany, Halliday, a physician's assistant, pinned on the rank of lieutenant colonel. His wife and daughters took care of replacing his uniform shoulder boards removing the gold leaf rank of major and replacing them with the silver leaf of a lieutenant colonel. However, the man pinning on the new rank to Halliday's beret was Sgt. Maj. Dennis Wheeler. Halliday and Wheeler both work on the ERMC clinical operations staff. The office is dual hatted for US Army Europe Surgeon's Office.

"I picked Sgt. Major Wheeler to pin the beret because he is a noncommissioned officer (NCO) and a friend," explained Halliday.

Though Halliday is a commissioned officer, he began his career as an enlisted troop. He went on to become an NCO as well as a Warrant Officer prior to his commissioning.

"I have a great appreciation for NCOs. They are the backbone of the Army and Sgt. Maj. Wheeler is a great American and the epitome of an NCO. I think that (background) helped through my whole career," said Halliday.

Being part of the ceremony was special for Wheeler because of Halliday's former experience as an NCO and the work they shared together during their time at V Corps.

"I felt honored," said Wheeler, "As a lieutenant colonel he remembered me, as a friend and a confidant -- people you talk to -- I think we developed a great working relationship at V Corps. We always went to the field together, deployed together, put up tents together in the field. We are the same age, have the same time in the Army so we have seen some of the same things. I think we have gelled together more or less because of this. And being a sergeant major it is my job to take care of my officers. I think I'm closer to him than other officers because I know him -- we've worked side by side," said Wheeler.

Halliday's and Wheeler's history dates back to 1976 when they were in the same basic training battalion at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Yet it wasn't until the two men were working for the V Corp Surgeons Office in Heidelberg in 2000 that they became friends and discovered their shared history.

"We did not know each other in basic (training)," explained Halliday. "We were in the same battalion but in two different companies. We were in the same class at Advanced Individual Training but I didn't know him," he said.

One day at work the men began talking about their Army backgrounds. This is when they realized they had been in the same places at the same times and the shared connection became apparent.

"We just were talking when I was at the Corps Surgeons Office about where we went to basic and it just popped into our heads," said Halliday.

Wheeler describes the event in a similar fashion.

"We first met at V Corps in 2000, he was Maj. Halliday then, and we knew some of the same people since he grew up as a physician's assistant (PA) and I grew up as a bravo (Army medic)," Wheeler explained, "and to top that off one of my additional duties as a bravo was to assist PAs and doctors. You see the whole patient population. So at that academic level I was just a couple of levels below a PA. It is an extended usage of medics to see patients."

Halliday began his career as an enlisted Army combat medic. He became a warrant officer in 1982 and later got his commission when the PA program transitioned from warrant officers to commissioned officers in 1992.

Wheeler, a sergeant major since 1999, who has been a combat medic and a clinical specialist during his career, chose a different path. The opportunity to become a PA was available but he decided to stay enlisted. When asked what he thought about Halliday becoming an officer he had this to say.

"He is one of a kind that has gone through all the ranks. He was enlisted, he was a warrant officer and he is a commissioned officer. He has been through all the rank structure. He's a great person to work with," said Wheeler.