

In the majors

BY MAJOR SCOTT RAMSEY –

Late Monday night the Santa Cruz, CA, leadership miraculously turned a little older. It is a phenomenon that occurred literally around the nation. It has never happened in The Salvation Army to this degree, but it all took place with the arrival of a simple letter.

What happened? Captain Shirley Breukelman and Captains Scott and Cherilee Ramsey became **majors** overnight. *Overnight* we became seasoned veterans, people with years of experience and expertise. The Salvation Army rank system changed, lowering the number of years to 15 that an officer has to serve before they reach the rank of **major**. My only thought: “I’m a **major**? For goodness sake, my wife’s parents are **majors**.”

A QUESTION OF YOUTH

I always liked the title, “captain.” It spoke to me of youth, vibrancy. Even though it didn’t fit with “The Salvation Army,” I liked the seafaring idea behind the term “captain”(he was the captain of the ship). I like it that a captain can have a “captain’s chair.” I have never heard of a **major’s** chair. I *have* heard the phrase, “Let the **major** have your seat, he needs to sit down.”

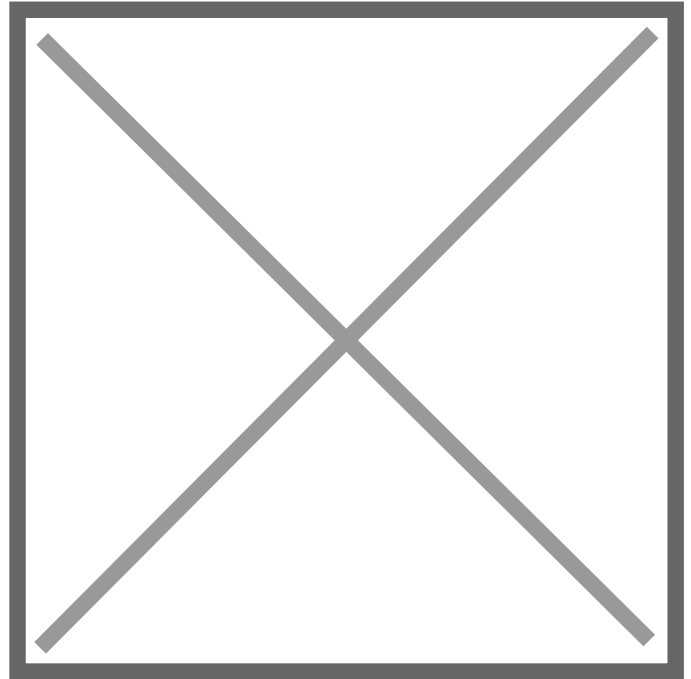
I did look up the dictionary’s definition of a **major**. It read, “greater in dignity, rank, importance or interest.” I liked that. Eighteen years of officership sounds like it means something when you define it like that. But then it hits me again, my wife’s parents are **majors**.

I remember back 13 years ago when I had to have a physical before I made the jump from lieutenant to captain. I recall the form the Army provided for the doctor to fill out. One section focused on the strength of my voice. It talked about an officer’s responsibilities in the open air, a strong voice was needed. I passed with flying colors. The **major’s** physical examination paperwork has no mention of voice strength at all; what a pity. Does it have something to do with the idea that as you grow older your voice diminishes?

IS IT ME?

Another way to gauge this whole **major** thing is to check out the thoughts of people. Maybe I am making too much out of it—I should see what others think. Most just wanted to know how much of raise I got because of my new rank. Imagine the surprise when I say the promotion came without any increase in allowance. So I went to the wisest woman at the corps—Esther Abbott. I told Esther that I was promoted to **major**. Her reply was that it couldn’t be possible, I was too young. She said she only knew “old” **majors**.

So, I continue to have mixed feelings about this **major** predicament in my life. Do I like it? Is it me? What type of **major** can I be? One thing I do know—when I finish my 19th year of officership next June I will officially have been an Army officer for



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over half of my lifetime. That to me is the most amazing thing.

Oh, by the way, even with all my confusion I will never face the conflict one officer, who had an article in the April 2000 *The Officer* magazine, has to deal with daily. His name? Lieutenant Colonel John **Major**.