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Dr. Maxwell

Advanced Comp

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Christopher O. Odom

Christopher Odom was born in Brooklyn, New York, and moved to Bamberg, South Carolina, at the age of five. Mr. Odom's mother thought that it was important for him to grow up outside of the big and somewhat troublesome city. During his young adult years, he spent time back and forth between the two states. His grandmother played a huge role in his upbringing, which he recalls being "stern but fair."

At the age of eighteen, while living in New York, Mr. Odom decided to join the Air Force after listening to advice from a friend. He thought the Air Force was ideal because he could not swim, which ruled out the Navy and Coast Guard, the Marine Corps was too Hoorah, and the Army was just not for him. The recruiter used his ASVAB from high school, which he scored well on even though Mr. Odom only took the test to get out of classes for the day.

Being eager to get out on his own, Mr. Odom joined the Air Force. Basic training was conducted at Lackland Air Force base in Texas. During his time as a young airman, he looked up to those who set a good example through personal conduct, like one of his Master Sergeants who sat him down and steered him in the right direction when he needed it. After this talk, MSG Odom changed his attitude and began to win awards.

He originally picked the job of air traffic control, but once he finished Basic Training, the job was no longer open. The rather upset Odom was called in to speak to a high-ranking enlisted airman at the time, and he gave Odom three options. He could choose between being a cook, firefighter or cop. He chose to be a cop.

While stationed in New Jersey at McGuire Air Force Base (Military Air Force command), Odom liked the fact that he was close to home. This is also where he met his wife. Being there kept him very busy, and he was able to excel in his position with law enforcement. He was originally surprised at the amount of violence and drug and alcohol abuse that occurred on and around the base, but he became seasoned and gained valuable experience in his field

MSG Odom's next station was Malmstrom Air Force Base; there he was a member of the missile squadron, which eventually turned into a security forces group. He arrived as a SSG and worked the missile field made of a military alert series. He was a crew chief in charge of an eight-man team conducting two to three training exercises a day, such as guarding a set CAT team if the launch facility broke down and needed to be fixed.

Italy was the next stop for MSG Odom. The camaraderie shown in Italy was very noticeable for Odom. Everyone was tightly knit simply because they were Americans and had a common goal. He was also deployed to Saudi Arabia and kept pictures of his family to remind him of the love he had back home. St. Thomas was also another place he was deployed to for a relief effort in the wake of Hurricane Marilyn. The Virgin Islands then became his favorite vacation spot.

Looking back on his career, Odom stresses the value of education and on-the-job training. He believes life experience is important as well. Striving to be a good leader is also

important to MSG. He believes that you learn lessons throughout your life and that the more experience you gain, the better leader you become. In this interview, MSG Odom provides an example of how one can develop principled leadership.