Army offers variety of job challenges

By
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Secretary of the Army

The variety and complexity of employment opportunities confronting today's young jobseeker must be as bewildering as the choices faced by Burden's mule (he slowly died of hunger, unable to decide among tempting bundles of hay before him).

Indeed, making choices can be painful. Very painful.

I say this fully aware of the nagging fact of wholesale youth unemployment in this country — a rate that far exceeds that of the adult unemployed population. Black teen joblessness soars in some areas of this nation to an astronomical 40 or 50 percent (or higher) of those eligible and-or seeking gainful employment.

These figures would seem to rule out a variety of choices; but such is not the case.

The joker here is that most of the jobs that go begging demand skilled or semi-skilled, professional or semi-professional, technical or semi-technical training as prerequisites to eligibility.

There is still much available employment that requires minimal or no training. It is work for the hardy and the willing; often it is seasonal and requires the applicant to travel to areas away from his or her home base. It is not work to be despised. No honest labor should be looked down upon.

So many young people shun this type of work. They say it is hot, heavy physically draining, spiritually and mentally unrewarding. They cannot see themselves thus employed for a lifetime. So instead of taking on the work as a temporary means while looking for something better, many do the "hip" thing: they opt not to work at all.

Consequently, many of these jobs also go begging. And since necessity is often the mother of invention, technology steps in, invents a mechanical process or machine to do the lifting, carrying, pulling, pushing, hauling, etc., and those jobs are taken forever from the market place.

Competition today for worthwhile employment is keener than ever. Often personnel departments must choose between several outstanding candidates whose credentials in terms of training and grade point averages are almost identical.

Community involvement and other outside activities, absent actual experience that help to make one or more rounded personality are then factored into the job-selection equation.

In order that effort exceed opportunity, the young person must somehow have developed the confidence that he or she can succeed and then dare to succeed. For without confidence in our ability to master and proficiently perform a given task, we are foredoomed to failure and thus, failure can dog our trail for the rest of our natural lives.

Nothing is easier to come by than failure. Ask the chronic derelict on the corner, the prison recidivist, the neighborhood drunk.

It requires toughness of mind and spirit to develop confidence, to make choices between options, to apply effort to accomplish one's goal.

Having done all this, a young man or woman may opt for the possibility of pursuing a number of careers, including an Army career. I want to address this aspect of the subject.

As the Secretary of the Army, I am proud of our All Volunteer Army. It is a quality Army comprised of able and dedicated men and women. But let me briefly describe our Army to you. The Active Army is an authorized 774,000 people. Within that we have less than 11 percent officers, almost two percent warrant officers and over 87 percent are enlisted men and women.

These soldiers serve around the world. Most of them are here in the United States, but almost 200,000 are serving in Europe and over 30,000 in South Korea. Much smaller groups are stationed in many other countries of the world.

But our All Volunteer Army is also its reserve strength comprised of the Army National Guard with a component of 369,000; a Reserve of paid drill strength of 201,000 and an Individual Ready-Reserve (a manpower pool from which in time of war would be drawn filler personnel) of 235,100, for a total of nearly 900,000. The total civilian strength of our Army is 365,000, making for a combined total of nearly 2 million people.

The budget for FY 1979 is $31.3 billion. We are indeed a large corporation.

Clifford Alexander

For young people in high school or just completing their high school education, the Army offers a number of opportunities. We recruit good men and women and we train them to be good soldiers.

Your Army now operates on the premise that education continues through a lifetime of service. Practical training is a daily activity throughout the Army.

Advanced school in specialized fields, as well as traditional areas, is available and utilized to a greater extent than in the past.

From basic training to the National War College and Civil graduate schooling, there are opportunities for education and improvement in skills, many of which will be useful professions in civilian life.

There were, as of January, 1978, forty-six officer MOS's (Military Occupational Specialties); thirty - eight warrant officers specialties which break down into 130 MOS's and 345 enlisted MOS's.

The number of Army job opportunities, indeed, would cause an indecisive person to make like Burden's mule and succumb to the bewildering array of choices.

When soldiers are mentioned, one generally thinks of infantry, armor or artillery troops. The Army has a lot of front line combat troops. But they depend on help from engineers, communications, Air Defense experts, medical specialists, cooks, administrators, clerks, accountants and support soldiers to be effective.

Since 1973 our Army has been an all-Volunteer one. It is also a quality Army. Eighty percent of those re-enlisting for a second tour of duty have completed their high school education.

The Army is no better than its leadership. Therefore, we have a special responsibility to provide young soldiers with competent leaders, officers and non-commissioned officers.

For those of you who have finished high school and have opted for college training, you should be aware of the advantages to be gained by joining the ROTC.

First, what is Army ROTC? The Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps is a military leadership instruction course offered to students from more than 600 institutions. Ending a seven-year decline, the ROTC's enrollment is up this year for the fourth consecutive year.

ROTC is charged with producing 70 percent of the new lieutenants on active duty in the Army each year. Some figures here are illustrative of the point: The U.S. Military Academy (West Point) produced last year 950 young Army officers. Officer Candidates' School (OCS) produced another 750. But the ROTC program produced nearly 4,000! Last year, 1,900 of these new lieutenants went into the Reserve Components.

We must anticipate leadership shortages. If today, for example, we do not enroll in ROTC enough young men and women from minority communities there will be a serious shortage of minorities ready to take on the mantle of front-line leadership in ranks of general officers by FY 90.

An ROTC student in an advanced two-year course will receive $100 every month he or she is in school up to 20 months. Uniforms and necessary textbooks and materials are also furnished.

Let me stress that today's Army is an equal opportunity employer. On a number of occasions I have said the Army, while it mirrors the social mores of our society, is ahead of most institutions in its concern and action in the area of equal opportunity.

However, if my experience in the world of equal opportunity has reinforced in me one belief, that is — we can never afford to rest on past accomplishments.

We are not where we should be in terms of opportunities available to civilian women and minorities employed in the Department of the Army. In 1977, for example, there were 94,743 civilian women employed by the Army and only three percent of these women were at salary levels of $18,000.

Our overall records show that approximately 33 percent of all white collar employees make $18,000 or more per year but only 16.5 percent minority white collar personnel earn that much or more.

As Secretary of the Army I am committed to improving this situation. Presently I am serving on a special Civil Service Commission Panel which is determining implementation procedures for a special emphasis employment plan.

This will allow expected appointments within the normal civil service structure when evidence exists of adverse impact on minorities and females in a given occupation. Bypassing normal civil service employment procedures will allow for a diversity of job opportunity and advancement for minorities and females.

Blacks and other minorities must not permit accident of race or sex to deter them from a chosen goal. They should note as Dr. William Brazziel, professor of higher education at the University of Connecticut, pointed out in a February Crisis magazine article (Pivotal Contributions by Black Americans): that "work of black Americans today enables us to use 300 products from peanuts, gas masks, stoplights, shoe lasts, sugar refining, open heart surgery, blood plasma, railway telegraphy (and coupling mechanism), third rail electricification for subway and the beautiful Tidal Basin of our nation's capital.

"We should also hail the black man who invented the golf tee and ruminate on the cultural changes this brought along with discussions of the black chef who brought forth the potato chip in a burst of inspiration one day in a resort kitchen in Upper New York."

Professor Brazziel also hailed the military heroism of black Americans in two world wars and in other American engagements including the Revolutionary War:

"These feats include a regiment which received the first Croix de Guerre awarded an American unit for valor under fire. This unit spent the longest period of any in trenches in World War I, won more than its share of Medals of Honor and was the first Allied unit to reach the Rhine.

"We could also talk about the coming of jazz music and its impact on our culture; about the black American who wrote the state song of Virginia and about the gift of the spiritual to the world and what that meant to people's lives.

"Or think about the black astrophysicist responsible for the lunar observatory our astronauts placed on the moon along with the one who did so much with seat ejection for jet planes."

We could go on with Dr. Brazziel, but the point is made. Color did not stand in the way of excellence of accomplishment of these cited above.

The Army will not stand in the way of your advancement if you are willing to give it your best.

Urban League offers career development aid

NEW YORK — Historically, the National Urban League has worked with traditionally black colleges and universities to expand career awareness and development at these institutions.

This relationship continues today as the league through its Faculty Career and Curriculum Development Program, Black Executive Exchange Program and New National Skills Bank is exposing a steadily increasing number of black students to career areas that they have not had much exposure to in the past and is enhancing career choices and options.

The Faculty Career and Curriculum Development Program has operated for the past 14 years and began as the Summer Fellowship Program. It now has two components. One places instructors from predominantly black colleges and universities in summer positions with industry and government enabling them to gain relevant experience in the public and private sector.

The other is the Career Awareness Conference which is conducted on campuses of predominantly black institutions, involving professionals from both the public and private sector.

"One of the main objectives of our program is to impact career development in a positive manner by expanding career awareness and options as well as providing up-to-date information on expanding career fields," said Vie Kaufman, director.

According to Ms. Kaufman, in the past decade there has been a shift in career trends and there is a great demand for blacks and other minorities in business and technical fields, engineering and other areas that had not been open to blacks.

"In our program, which is geared to undergraduate students, we can't say don't go into the traditional areas, because there will always be a need for good teachers, social workers, doctors and lawyers."

"In the past these professions had been where most of our black role models were located, and substantial numbers of black students continue to choose these career areas," she added.

Ms. Kaufman said the program has a responsibility to expose and inform students concerning the emerging career areas such as engineering, industrial relations, accoutning, food management and banking and finance.

A realization by the league that black students needed a wider knowledge about less traditional career fields, up-to-date and continuing information about business techniques and practices, and greater exposure to identifiable role models, led to the birth of the Black Executive Exchange Program (BEEP), an outgrowth of the Faculty Career and Curriculum Development Program.

Now in its ninth year, BEEP arranges for black professionals from the corporate world to teach credit-bearing courses to black students in numerous subjects including accounting, applied engineering, real estate, physics, computer science and advertising.

A component of BEEP is the Career Awareness and Planning Seminar which introduces students to career planning, interviewing techniques and resume preparation and is held on a few selected campuses each year.

BEEP emphasizes role models and that is very important according to Renee Du Jean, director of BEEP. "Industry is opening up to blacks and other minorities. The motivational benefits gained by students when they find that there are blacks in the corporate sector has been a tremendous aid in helping them choose careers that previously were not open to blacks and in choosing career areas they hadn't been encouraged to enter," she said.

"The response we have gotten from the schools, corporate participants and students indicates that the combination of real courses and role models is leading to better defined career choices," she added.

"As I see it now," Ms. Du Jean said, "engineering is a wide open field for minorities. Chemical, nuclear, mechanical, metallurgical and marine engineers are in great demand. The increased concern with energy development is fueling this trend."

Ms. Du Jean said there has been a significant change in career choice in several key areas including business, banking and marketing. "There are more black certified public accountants, banking managers and marketing sales representatives than ever before," according to Ms. Du Jean.

She feels there is great potential for black professionals in the insurance industry and a quietly emerging career field for blacks in the food industry. The hotel and restaurant industry also shows a lot of potential.

But there are still professions in which more blacks are needed. Ms. Du Jean cited the behind the scenes and technical aspects of the movie industry, mass communications, the commodities and stock industry, foreign service and legislative consulting.

Unfortunately, according to Ms. Du Jean, there still aren't significant numbers of black students choosing these areas, and we have to begin to address this problem on the high school level.

The New National Skills Bank is a computerized job service which includes a reservoir of skilled blacks and a listing of available jobs in various occupations.

Muhammad Ali and wife enjoy visit to Disney World

Young people key to Disney service

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Young people play a major role in the services provided by sprawling Walt Disney World here.

Guests at the 27,000 - acre complex pay these young people tribute when they comment favorably on the cleanliness, overall personal appearance and service at the world's largest and most unique vacation resort.

Bob Billingslea, corporate equal opportunity program manager, says the hiring policy is "to be fair and impartial in all its relations with employees and applicants without regard to race, sex, religion, color, age, national origin, martial status or handicap."

Billingslea said, Disney World is presently participating in several college co - op programs.

Students earn credits while working, giving them a chance to see if they like Disney and have a future there.

It gives Disney a chance to look at the student to determine his or her potential with the company. If all goes well, and the two are meant for each other, we hope to see the student after graduation," he said.

Similar to the co - op programs is the "work experience" program. The student in it works at Disney World during a summer vacation for practical experience.

Major emphasis is being placed on recruiting minorities and women, Billingslea said.

"Filds of interest we are currently seeking include such areas as food service management, engineering, accounting, marketing and art," he said.

Recruiting teams from Disney are visiting such schools as Florida A & M, Bethune Cookman, Cincinnati University, Houston University, Cornell, Michigan State, Rhode Island School of Design, Morehouse, Spelman, Clark, Atlanta University, Georgia Tech, Howard, and Morris Brown.

Basically, Disney World is looking for people who are friendly, energetic and agree with the belief that an informal, friendly organization is the best way to produce the finest in family entertainment.

The professional staffing office can be written to at Department AA, P.O. Box 40, Lake Buena Vista, Fla. 32830

Social Security: How the system hires now

Have you earned or are you in the process of earning a high school diploma or college degree? Do you want to earn a good living doing work that helps others as well as yourself?

If you've answered yes to either of these questions, have you considered work with the Social Security Administration?

You may already know that SSA, as a component of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, is undergoing a reorganization, which has resulted in a temporary cutback in hiring.

But you might want to take some time to build on your skills and qualifications, and to consider whether you would be willing and qualified to work for SSA in the future.

SSA currently employs about 87,000 people nationally; about 22,000 at its Woodlawn, Md., headquarters near Baltimore, and about 65,000 in other parts of the country.

SSA's purpose is to pay benefits to people who are entitled to receive them under the retirement, survivors and disability insurance programs, and the Supplemental Security Income program for the needy aged, blind and disabled.

SSA is also responsible for federal aspects of the state - administered Aid to Families with Dependent Children program.

Most SSA entry jobs for college graduates are filled through the Professional and Administrative Career Examination (PACE). You need a college degree or equivalent experience to be eligible to take the PACE examination.

This examination tests your ability to understand and interpret complex reading material; make decisions or take action to solve problems and arrive at the most logical conclusion; and perform arithmetic operations. Competition is extremely keen; people who score below 95 rarely are referred from the PACE list for jobs.

Trainee positions from the PACE list are filled at the GS - 5 ($9,959) level. If you wish to be scheduled to take the PACE examation, you should contact the Federal Job Information center in your area.

College - level entry jobs in SSA are found in district offices around the country; in Program Service Centers located Philadelphia, New York, Birmingham, Kansas City, Chicago and San Francisco; and at SSA headquarters in Woodlawn.

In a district office you would be trained as a Social Insurance Representative. You'd work most of the time with people, making important judgments that depend upon your understanding of Social Security regulations and the situations of people filing claims. You'd start at the GS - 5 level with eventual promotion to GS - ($16,618).

In a Program Service Center you would be trained as a Claims Authorizer or a Benefit Examiner. A Claims Authorizer studies the information on which a claim for benefits is based and then matches the claims with regulations to decide whether benefits are due, and if so, exactly how much.

A Benefit Examiner deals with cases where benefits are already being paid and something happens that changes the situation.

The Claims Authorizer and Benefit Examiner positions also start at the GS - 5 grade level with eventual promotion to GS - 10 and GS - 8 ($13,662), respectively.

SSA fills Benefit Examiner positions from the Junior Federal Assistant (JFA) examination lists. The JFA examination is similar to the PACE; but you need less than 4 years of college or equivalent experience to be eligible to take the JFA.

In the Bureau of Disability Insurance at SSA headquarters, the work is much the same as a Claims Authorizer or a Benefit Examiner in the Program Service Centers, but you would make decisions on cases involving disability.

If you are especially interested in locating in Baltimore, you might want to apply for one of the following positions: Social Insurance Claims Authorizer (disibility), Social Insurance Claims Examiner (Retirement) (Claims Authorization Branch) and Computer Programmer. All of these positions are at the Woodlawn headquarters.

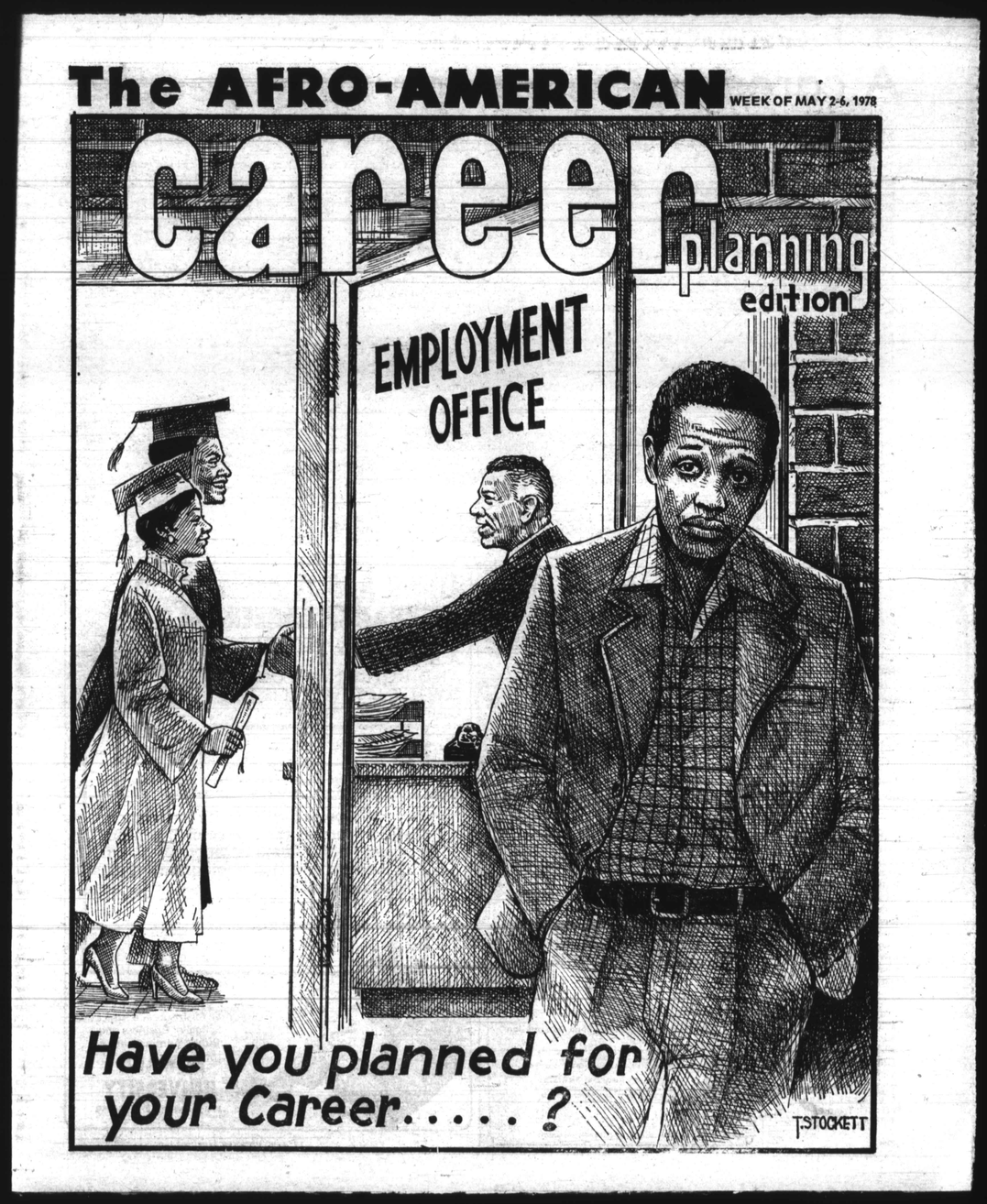
Computer programmer trainees usually begin at the GS - 5 level with eventual promotion to GS - 12 ($21,883).

Promotional opportunities include other positions such as Computer Systems Analyst, Social Insurance Systems Analyst or management positions.

To qualify as a Computer Programmer, you must pass the PACE or qualify under the SSA Computer Specialists Announcement.

If you're not eligible to take the PACE because you are not a college graduate, you might be able to qualify to take the Junior Federal Assistant Examination (JFA).

Junior Federal Assistants may serve in a variety of administrative, technical, or non - routine clerical positions starting at the GS - 4 ($8,902) level.

The JFA list is most often used by SSA to fill the Benefit Examiner and Service Representative positions. You need 2 years of college, 2 years of responsible experience, or a combination of both totaling 2 years to qualify to take the JFA examination. The JFA tests you for the same abilities as the PACE does, and here, too, competition is keen.

You need only a high school diploma to qualify to take a third examination — the Office Assistant Examination.