



Peter Hastings

Recruiter Hack: 'I love the Army'

## Sergeant Hack Wants You

"If you don't advertise," proclaims the brawny, blond young man, "you're out of business." With that, S/Sgt. David Denton Hack adjusts his wire-rimmed granny glasses, jumps into his 1960 red, white and blue competition-tuned Corvette and heads for the local drag strip where he will spend a weekend talking to young people about gear ratios, dual cams and—not incidentally—the virtues of joining the U.S. Army.

In the often somber business of military recruiting, Sergeant Hack is a refreshing change. He is as glib as a snake-oil salesman, yet as honest as a judge. He cruises around his duty station, the city of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, wearing an Uncle Sam wrist watch and dispensing T-shirts that declare, "Sgt. Hack wants you." His conversations with young people may range from music to sports, but Sergeant Hack always brings it back to his main interest—the U.S. Army. "I would like to see Sergeant Hack run the public-relations program for the entire recruiting system," declares Ohio Rep. John Seiberling. "We're going to need his kind of creativity if the volunteer Army is to be successful."

**Style:** The fate of an all-volunteer Army—and, thus, the fate of the draft—hinges largely on the success of its recruiters (the Army gets about 10,000 volunteers a month and expects to need 20,000 monthly if the draft ends). Thus, the 32-year-old Sergeant Hack, who in June signed up fourteen men, compared to his quota of four, has caught the Pentagon's eye. "His style is an attention getter," says Maj. Gen. John Henion, chief of Army recruiting. "But when he gets a young man, he sits down and tells him what the service actually has to offer."

A latecomer to Army ranks, Hack owned a night club in Nashville, Tenn.,

until a law suit forced him into bankruptcy. "I was wiped slick," he drawls. Faced with unemployment, Hack joined the Army on April Fools' Day in 1964 and became a Ranger. After a series of obscure duty assignments, he went to Vietnam in 1968 as a "career guidance" non-commissioned officer—that is, a man charged with getting his fellow soldiers to re-enlist. Hack would often venture onto the battlefields to talk to the men; he was wounded twice and sent home to recuperate. "I decided then that I wanted to be a recruiter," he recalls. "I think it's elite because in a sense you are the Army in your community."

But the Army has not always been as gracious to the young sergeant as he has been to the service. Even while chalking up admirable recruiting records, he was reprimanded by his district commander who wrote, "Your failure to maintain acceptable standards raises serious questions as to your degree of competency as a recruiter." The reprimand was rescinded, Sergeant Hack notes proudly, when reports of his success became public knowledge. Now Hack continues to go where the young people are and continues to spend his own money on improving the Army's image. "Maybe they think I'm trying to recruit a bunch of long-haired freaks," Hack says of his critics. "But I'm looking for motivation, attitude and sincerity. I love my country and, for what it's worth, I love the Army."

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