Sergeant Major Turpin knew that achieving the grade and honor of becoming the first African American female to be promoted to SGM in the Ohio Army National Guard would mean mentoring other females, which was an accepted challenge,

By EDWIN D. ROBINSON, SR.

(CW2 Army, Retired)

Sergeant Major Tanya Turpin

HHC 16th ENG BDE

Ohio Army National Guard

Born in Cassopolis, Michigan to Mr. and Mrs. William “Calvin” (Tannette) Turpin, Tanya Turpin, the youngest to her twin sister Tammy, entered into the active army in 1987. At the age of 17 and a single mother, Tanya joined the army wanting a better life and was determined to give her son, now Sergeant Stacey L. Turpin, an even better one, who is also an active member of the Ohio Army Guard with the 371st Signal Detachment in Newark, Ohio .
SGM Turpin says, “He is her greatest supporter and inspiration”. The Turpins are following a family tradition of military service in that both Tanya’s grandfathers served in the army during the Vietnam War.

After thirteen years in the regular army, Tanya re-enlisted into the Ohio Army National Guard and twenty-four years later, on October, 5, 2011, from Master Sergeant, she was promoted as the Ohio Guard’s first African American female to the rank of Sergeant Major (SGM).

During her years of service, Tanya’s goal had always been to retire at the highest rank of the Enlisted Corps, which is E-9; Sergeant Major. However, Tanya hadn’t thought she may probably be the first to break through the preverbal “Glass Ceiling” that no African American female had yet reached, SGM in the Ohio Army National Guard. Yet, it wasn’t until she was promoted to Master Sergeant (E-8) and she began to set her sights on Sergeant Major. However, Sergeant Major Turpin accredits some of her success to Major Mark Hatfield, who mentored her and believed in her.

She says, “He pushed me to believe that I could do anything I put my mind to”. She soon realized that there had not been a black female promoted to SGM before her in the Ohio Guard, so she set her sight on yet another goal.

Her interest spiked her enthusiasm as she started applying and attending the various required military schools for training and further education that would prepare and support her path to the next higher grade, SGM. Sergeant Major Turpin made a calculated commitment coupled with personal sacrifices to her and her family in order to accomplish those set goals that would set

her above her peers that soon got her noticed as an outstanding enlisted leader setting a standard that others could follow.

Sergeant Major Turpin knew that achieving the grade and honor of becoming the first African American female to be promoted to SGM in the Ohio Army National Guard would mean mentoring other females, which was an accepted challenge, especially after facing the many doubts and beliefs that women could not do what most men did. She recalls being told that as a younger enlistee during her enrollment in a School for the Primary Leadership Development Course, where she and two other female soldiers attended, passed, and proved the statement wrong. Yet, Sergeant Major Turpin was willing to accept the challenges placed before her because there seemed to be a need of a mentor that other females could look up to and see that it was in fact possible for them to achieve the next higher ranks, especially that of SGM in the Ohio Guard. The Ohio Guard had been for decades an organization predominately of white males, especially in the senior grades and higher ranks of the Commissioned Officers, although is slowly changing. Sergeant Major Turpin's goal became a dream for her on October 01, 2011, as she was pinned by her mother, Mrs. Tannette Turpin during her promotional ceremony located at the Guard's newest facility located at DSCC in Columbus, Ohio.

SGM Turpin has since been amazed and somewhat shocked in the fact that she is the first African American female SGM and in some fashion believes her promotion has made a difference in what can be accomplished. She hopes that she is not the last one.

SGM Turpin was assigned as the SGM for HHC 16th ENG BDE, where she follows the footsteps of the Ohio Guard's first female Sergeant Major Verna Henderson, on March of 1999, which cracked "The Good Ole Boy's" Glass Ceiling.

SGM Turpin currently enrolled in the Sergeant Major Academy. Her career was forged as she completed the Basic and Advanced Non-Commissioned Officer's Courses and the First Sergeant's School.

SGM Turpin says, "I would not change a thing in how my career has advanced and I have one more goal and that is to become a Command Sergeant Major". No doubt, she will obtain that goal.

SGM Turpin's advice to those seeking the next higher rank or grade in this organization is to stick to it, it can be tough, "If you start it, see it through".

Cutline

(Turpin's unit joins her family as they attend the celebration of her promotion to Sergeant Major)

BIO:

Name: Tanya (MI) Turpin

DOB (Twin): April 7, 1968

Place of Birth: Cassopolis, Michigan

High School – Ross Beatty High School

Promoted Sergeant Major 05 OCT 2011

Company: HHC 16th ENG BDE

3990 E. Broad ST, Bldg 2

Columbus, OH 43213

20 years active duty: 27 AUG 2011

Currently enrolled in the SGM Academy

Completed 1SG School – JUL 2010

Promoted to Master Sergeant - AUG 2008

Completed ANCOC – JUL 2006

Promoted to Sergeant First Class – APR 2005

Promoted to Staff Sergeant – AUG 2002 (Ohio Guard)

Enlisted into Army Guard Reserves as E-5/Sergeant - SEP 2000

Active Duty

Promoted to Staff Sergeant –NOV 1997

Completed BNCOC – NOV 1995

Promoted to Sergeant – JAN 1993

Enlistment date: 27 NOV 1987