



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: Your Supervisor

"Be All You Can Be"

TO: A New Lieutenant

"Be all you can be." The Army said it first, but we in the Air Force should enthusiastically agree. Throughout our lives we are exhorted to be the best. In school we are encouraged to make all "A's" and graduate first in the class. In sports we must run the fastest, jump the farthest, make the most touchdowns, score the most baskets, or kick the most goals.

There is nothing wrong with being the best at what you do, but it is more important to do your best than to be the best. I agree that you should set your goals high and shoot for them, but remember, best by definition means there can only be one best. So where does that leave us? Back to our slogan, "Be all you can be." The key words are "all" and "you." If you give your all every time, then you are doing your best. There is no shame in finishing second, third or even last, as long as you can honestly say you did your best. Think of the person who struggled to succeed at whatever he tried to do. This is the guy who played third string on the football team, but never quit; the same guy who graduated from high school with straight "C's" but never stopped studying; the one who struggled every step of the way, but smiled because he knew he was doing the best they could do. He is also the guy who saved his buddies in Vietnam by falling on the live hand grenade or repeatedly flying into dense antiaircraft fire to rescue a downed comrade because he knew what it meant to do his best, to be all he could be.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul G. Patton".

Paul G. Patton, Colonel, USAF
AN OLD LIEUTENANT