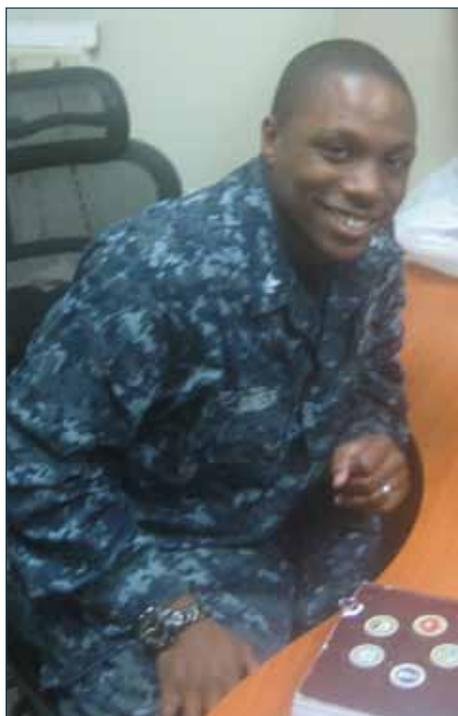


Legalman Paralegal Education Program

By LN2 Dexter Robison, Jr.
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Before converting to my current rate of legalman I was an aviation electronics technician. The duties of an aviation electronics technician include repairing and maintaining the electronic components of aircraft, such as radios, GPS, and weapon guidance systems. I have worked on two different platforms during my career as an aviation electronics technician. I was at Strike Fighter Squadron-131 working on F/A 18 Hornets before transferring to Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW-120), where I worked on the E2C Hawkeye and C2A Greyhound.

Although I enjoyed my time as an aviation electronics technician, my time as a legalman has been unique and challenging, and overall exciting. I was among the first students to graduate from the Legalman Paralegal Education Program (LPEP). LPEP is designed



LN2 Dexter Robison, Jr. at his desk at the Region Legal Service Office EURAFSWA

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to educate legalmen as paralegals, allowing them to take on additional duties currently being performed by attorneys. This will be accomplished by requiring all legalmen to obtain an associate’s degree from an ABA accredited college.

For weeks, my fellow legalmen and I went to night classes, completing five courses. The classes we took included criminal law, business organization for paralegals, litigation, contracts and domestic relations. Though we had a great deal of homework, we had four hours of study time at the Naval Justice School, which helped out a lot. There were many naval attorneys, who provided us with any kind of assistance we needed, even if it was just to listen and reassure us we were on the right track. That was one of the best parts of LPEP, having legal professionals available when there was something in the material we did not understand. The fleet returnees offered additional assistance. The fleet returnees were legalmen who, like the instructors, had been in the fleet doing the job prior to returning to Naval Justice School to go through LPEP. They were able to tell us what to expect in our first command as well as provide a little more insight on topics we may not have understood during school.

During LPEP, we did not have class on Fridays. This break afforded us the opportunity to practice factual situations, which were scenarios of misconduct by military members sent to non-judicial punishment or courts-martial. We were required to do all the paperwork for the factual situations, while the fleet returnees checked our work. The fleet returnees

corrected our mistakes as well as taught us why such mistakes were wrong. They had a big impact on my view of legalmen and I chose LNC Eric Smart to be my mentor.

I have been assigned to Region Legal Service Office in Sigonella, Italy. There, I will be assisting the judge advocates with non-judicial punishment and trial preparation. LPEP helped prepare me for this work by allowing me the opportunity to apply my knowledge as well as teaching me the material. It also provided me with essential tools that I can employ when and if my work crosses over into civilian jurisdiction. Furthermore, LPEP gave me an idea of what paralegals in the civilian courts deal with on a daily basis.

One more huge benefit, is the extension of LPEP into the civilian world. Once legalmen separate from the military, they will do so with not only job experience but the academic degree to support their knowledge and skills. Indeed, LPEP is a unique program necessary for our rating. Coupled with the Naval Justice School, it is undoubtedly integral to the proper and thorough preparation of future legalmen.

Inspired by my initial success at the university, I plan to continue the program at Roger Williams University and get my bachelor’s degree in Paralegal Studies. When I achieve my bachelor’s, I would like to continue on to get a master’s degree by the end of my enlistment. I recognize my time in LPEP as an invaluable experience, one that I firmly believe will help me to advance in the legalman community as I continue to proudly serve the U.S. Navy. 🌟