

Jack Friery—Essay in Support of NCMA Scholarship Application

“A soldier will fight long and hard for a bit of colored ribbon.”

--Napoleon Bonaparte

The “colored ribbons” that I have fought so hard for are the NCMA CCCM and CFCM certifications. Why work so hard for these certifications? A primary factor is to achieve recognition for the experience I have accumulated in the 35 or so years I have been in the Government contracting community. And, since my experience has been both a government and industry lawyer, achieving both commercial and federal certifications would be especially rewarding.

But my goals are not just focused on recognition for past experience. I have a very real responsibility to the federal acquisition system today in regard to my law practice. I predominantly counsel and represent high-tech small businesses in dealings with the Government, both as prime contractors and subcontractors. These businesses are often new, certainly to the Government marketplace, and are almost always naïve in their dealings in that marketplace. And, in representing these young companies, I very often have to communicate on their behalf with their Government and prime contractor customers. The NCMA certifications will provide me—and my clients—a level of credibility in dealing with those customers that probably cannot be achieved in any other way. NCMA certifications are recognized as the gold standard in the acquisition community across the nation. If I have the certifications, that will help my clients. But I also have to believe that it will ultimately help the Government receive quality goods and services from my clients, and thus help the federal acquisition system as well.

Another primary motivation for achieving NCMA certification relates to my mission as a teacher of contract-related courses. Over the past twenty or more years, I have had a secondary career as a teacher of contract law, both in the academic and in the professional seminar contexts. I have

taught federal contract-related courses in the Contract Management certificate programs at San Diego State and at UC Irvine. I taught International Contracting (to predominantly foreign business students) at the School of Business of Alliant International University. I presently teach Contract Law in the Paralegal program at UC San Diego. And, most closely related to the federal acquisition system, I currently teach for Federal Publications Seminars (and, in the recent past, for its competitor, ESI International). These professional seminars are for both contractor and US Government audiences. Seminars in recent months have included the full range of Government contract topics, including Incentive Contracting, Licensing Technology to the Government, Source Selection, Contract Types, Appropriations Law, and many more. Based on this teaching experience, is clear to me that educating young people who will enter the federal acquisition system—either on the contractor or Government side—is as important as any other factor for the continued vitality of that system. The federal acquisition system simply continues to get more complex, the workforce further stretched, and the deadlines more quickly impending. Educating both the buyer and the seller in this environment is plainly indispensable. I am proud of my experiences of teaching young people in both commercial and Government contracting. The CCCM and CFCM, however, will, I feel, add a dimension to my teaching capability that I cannot otherwise achieve. For one thing, studying for these certifications forces me to look at both commercial and Government contracting from a global standpoint. There is probably no other opportunity to study these systems from beginning to end. That, indisputably, will make me a better teacher, and ideally make my students better practitioners in the federal or commercial acquisition systems.

Finally, achieving the CCCM and CFCM certifications will help me in my role as a mentor to younger people in federal acquisition. That role has, in my opinion, been sorely lacking in the

federal acquisition environment, and the system has suffered. In recent years, I have acted as an advisor to the Board of Directors of the San Diego NCMA chapter. I served as a formal mentor in the inaugural NCMA National Leadership Development Program. I am scheduled to teach a preparation session at an upcoming NCMA National conference on the NCMA certification process. And I have informally mentored and advised young NCMA members and others. If I can bring my experience to bear in directing the careers and professional choices of young people in federal acquisition, I believe the system has to benefit. The NCMA CCCM and CFCM designations will certainly help add credibility to my role as a mentor.