

## A Lifelong Journey

By Olen L. Greer, CMA



**Olen L. Greer, CMA, Ph.D., is a professor of accountancy at Missouri State University and is a member of IMA's Greater Ozarks Chapter. You can reach him at [OlenGreer@MissouriState.edu](mailto:OlenGreer@MissouriState.edu).**

**“L**ieutenant Greer, you’ve been selected to participate in a special management development training program. Your duty assignment will be to conduct management development training within the Division Support Command of the First Infantry Division.” Thus began my management accounting journey. As a management development trainer at Fort Riley, Kan., I developed a love and appreciation for the manager role and leadership. Shortly after completing that assignment, I was promoted to Captain and transferred to Germany as the company commander of a medical company, where I implemented the management philosophies and techniques that I had been teaching.

“Olen, we need someone to teach managerial/cost accounting here at Southwest Missouri State University. You’ve got a bachelor’s degree in accounting and an MBA. Would you consider a teaching position here?” This offer, tendered by Dr. Glenn Downing, the accounting department head at SMSU, was the second major step in my journey. I had recently left the military and was on the SMSU campus inquiring about obtaining a credential in healthcare administration, capitalizing on my military experience as a Medical Service Corps officer. I had stopped by the office of one of my former professors, Dr. Trewatha, to say hello. After hearing that I had obtained an MBA from the University of Colorado, he told me about the opening and recommended that I check in with Glenn. I wasn’t really interested, but

I thought, “What could it hurt?”

The next day I signed a contract to become an accounting instructor at SMSU. I thought at first that my teaching career would be short-lived—that I would ultimately wind up in a hospital administration position—but I fell in love with teaching as a profession and with management accounting as a specialty area. The combination of my leadership and management training background from the military and my accounting education resulted in a perfect chemistry for teaching management accounting.

During my first semester as an instructor, Glenn suggested that I go to a meeting of the National Association of Accountants (NAA), as IMA® was called at the time. I was impressed by the experience. The meeting was conducted with professionalism, the speaker was interesting, and, most of all, I sensed a camaraderie among the members. In the third major step of my journey, I joined NAA that evening.

It has been 34 years since I received that duty assignment, and I can look back on a career of involvement in the management accounting profession. One of the most rewarding aspects of my journey has been my involvement in IMA. I have served in virtually every chapter and council position available. Presently, I’m completing my 10th year on IMA’s Global Board. Obtaining the CMA® (Certified Management Accountant) certification in 1987 was critical to my career advancement as a professor, and I have made many lifetime friendships within IMA. **SF**