History of the Noncommissioned Officer Essay
Sergeants Major of the Army

By
Sergeant Major Maurice Riley

Base Group L-10
CWO Hodge
19 January 2006

I. Introduction

A. The sergeants Major of the Army / Daniel K. Elder… [et al.], general editors-Rev.ed.

https://www.bliss.army.mil/usasma/journal/publications/2005/05summer_SMA.pdf

As I see It "Soldiers" 30 (July1975): 6-9

B. The purpose of this information paper is to familiarize you with the History of the Sergeant Major of the Army.

II. Body

A. History of the Sergeant Major of the Army

B. Previous Sergeants Major of the Army

C. Contributions from each Sergeant Major of the Army

III. Closing

A. Summary: For the 15 minutes we have discussed the History of the Sergeant Major of the Army, Previous Sergeants Major of the Army, and the contributions of each one.

B. Questions and Answer

C. Conclusion: The establishment of the SMA position reflected the importance of soldier's related issues in today's Army and the belief that having an accomplished senior enlisted soldier in the Pentagon would facilitate to communication and understanding between the seniors official and soldiers in the field.

Work Cited

The sergeants Major of the Army / Daniel K. Elder… [et al.], general editors-Rev.ed.

https://www.bliss.army.mil/usasma/journal/publications/2005/05summer_SMA.pdf

As I see It "Soldiers" 30 (July1975): 6-9

History of the Sergeants Major of the Army General Harold K. Johnson with General Order number 29 established the position of Sergeant Major of The Army on 4 July 1966. Since this positions establishment we have had thirteen Sergeant Majors of the Army SMA's. The SMA is the Chief of Staff expert in all matters concerning the enlisted force. The sergeant Major of the Army's job is to comment on the enlisted Army, carrying to the Chief are the news god or bad, regarding the state of enlisted force based on his experience. SMA is rooted in the History of the NCO Corps, the rank of Sergeant Major and the increasing professionalism within the army over the years.

The first Sergeant Major of the Army, Sergeant Major William O. Wooldridge, assumed his duties in an environment of upheaval and uncertainty. For example, in mid May 1966, just before SMA Woodridge assumed his duties the draft failed to acquire enough soldiers who met the Army's physical and mental standards. The need to sustain and expand the Army without mobilizing a reserve component also put a heavy strain on the Noncommissioned Officer Corps.

In addition, the Vietnam War grew increasingly unpopular at home and within the Army itself. Three accomplishments during SMA Wooldridge tenure were Centralized Promotion system, miniature pin on insignia of rank for fatigues and other utility uniforms and the establishment of the Command Sergeant Major (CSM) rank.

The second was SMA George W. Dunaway. Concerns for SMA Dunaway were to preserve the gains Wooldridge had made in establishing the office of Sergeant Major of the Army and to protect it from its dictators. The SMA needed an office and General Johnson made it clear that he wanted to see his sergeant major routinely and often. The

area selected for the SMA was directly across the hall from the Chief of Staff's receptionist. Virtually everyone on that side of the hall in the 600 block of the 'E' wing lost space. There was resentment, especially among senior officers. The consequences of resentment were compounded when General Westmoreland awarded SMA Dunaway four-star protocol status. Dunaway care for the Noncommissioned Officer Corps to reestablish the level of discipline and professionalism of previous eras. The second significant program approved during Dunaway's incumbency was the Noncommissioned officers Education System (NCOES). This at that time was on three levels. Dunaway himself thought a two-year tour best ensuring a continual infusion of fresh ideas and vigor into the office of SMA.

The Sergeant Major of the Army Solis L. Copeland a combat veteran of World War II and Korea, before his selection as the 3rd SMA, he served as CSM of the 4th Infantry Division in Vietnam. Copeland faced formidable task. The unspoken challenge was of course to complete the work Wooldridge and Dunaway begun institutionalizing and strengthening the SMA's office. To protect a positive image he made special efforts to win the good will of Commanders and officers in the field and show them that the SMA was a senior NCO working with supporting and assisting other NCOs and not a whistle blower or spy from the Pentagon. Copeland's main challenge was to help move the Army to an all-volunteer force.

The 4th Sergeant Major of the Army Leon L. Van Autorene assumed the position of SMA in July 1973. He left the job as Command Sergeant Major of Alaska, the first engineer selected for the job and at 53 years of age the oldest. Faced with greatly reduced budgets and fixed active duty strength of 780,000 the Army leadership had to

meet the readiness demands with fewer resources. During the two years of SMA Van Autroue's tour, Army-wide efforts thus continued to building an increasingly professional NCO Corps. He also assisted in the development of the Enlisted Personnel Management System (EPMS).

SMA Van Autreue also saw the Army take first steps towards one station training and promoted the Army Chief of Staff goals of improving the quality of the enlisted force.

The fifth Sergeant Major of the Army was William G. Bambridge. During SMA Bambridge tenure the tour of Sergeant Major of the Army was changed to meet the same time as the Army Chief of Staff. In 1977 Army Regulation 600-20 formalized the CSM position and assigned specific duties to the Command Sergeant Major. It also established the NCO support channel, a chain of communication between CSM and First Sergeant and other NCOs. In his role as Sergeant Major of the Army, SMA Bambridge personally emphasized increased responsibility authority and prestige for noncommissioned officers as well as readiness through education and moral discipline.

The sixth Sergeant Major of the Army was William A. Connelly. He was the first SMA who had completed the United States Army Sergeant Major Academy (USASMA) he assumed duties in July 1979 coming from Command Sergeant Major of Forces command. During his tenure SMA Connelly was instrumental in developing the Noncommissioned Officer Development Plan (NCODP). He also started working to eliminate the specialist above the grade of E-4 which was approved in 1985. Of all of SMA Connelly contributions however his greatest accomplishment was training. Noncommissioned Officers Education System Skill Qualification Test (SQT) and Common Task Testing (CTT).

The seventh Sergeant Major of the Army was Glen E. Morrell. Among his specific objectives was extra pay for first sergeants and Command Sergeant Major and final elimination of the specialist rank. The primary Leadership Development Course (PLDC), formed in 1985. The Army experienced a major problem with military occupational specialty (MOS) imbalance that is consistence between existing soldier's specifications and those needed or authorized. Some 5,000 soldiers reclassified to a shortage MOS. By 1986 increased funds for recruiting, better enlistment bonuses, a new GI Bill and improve quality of life program were attracting and keeping good quality soldiers in the army.

The eighth Sergeant major of The Army Julius W. Gates was the first SMA to have served in a joint command. SMA Gates would put his experience to good use in the Pentagon's multiservice environment. SMA Gates first major challenge was to educate Army leaders on the implementation of the Non commissioned Officer Evaluation Report (NCOER) which replaced the old Enlisted Evaluation Report (EER). Secretary of The Army John O. Marsh, Jr and General Vaunt were fully committed to advancing the cause of NCO professionalism and endorsed SMA Gates suggestions that they designate 1989 the year of the Noncommissioned Officer. He also bore a great deal of responsibility for the inauguration of the NCO Journal, the first official journal written by and for Noncommissioned officers.

The ninth Sergeant Major of the Army was Richard A. Kidd. A key challenge for SMA Kidd was to make sure certain that the Army took proper care of those enlisted personnel who left the service as a result of the drawdown. On 17 October 1994, SMA Kidd introduced a redesigned chevron to represent the Sergeant Major of The Army. Consensus was to abolish the Self Development Test (SDT). The SDT was the 1990

replacement for the Skill Qualification Test (SQT) developed during SMA Bainbridge's tour. The Army finally formalized the tour length of the Sergeant Major of the Army to the current four year term. The original General Orders No. 29 that established the position had directed that the SMA's tenure correspond to the tenure of the Chief of Staff who he served.

The tenth Sergeant Major of the Army was Gene C. McKinney who served as the Command Sergeant Major for US Army Europe was the first minority service member to hold the office of Sergeant Major of the Army. During the 1995 World Wide Noncommissioned Officer Education System Conference SMA McKinney impressed on the delegates the idea that universal standards of training must be applied throughout the Army. SMA McKinney explained to the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (ODSPER) that CSMs did not receive any pay increase as they progressed through duty position from battalion to Major Commands. SMA was relieved by the Chief of Staff General Reimer for improper conduct.

The eleventh Sergeant Major of the Army Robert E. Hall. As an Air Defense Artilleryman, SMA Hall came to SMA position from the US Central Artilleryman; Hall came to SMA position from the US Central Command, a combat veteran having served as the 24th Infantry Division Artillery Command Sergeant during Operation Desert Storm. SMA Hall was the first SMA who had not served in Vietnam. The Army was struggling to meet its recruiting and end strength goals. The Army developed new recruiting ads targeted at the youth of the info age. Later the advertising changed agencies and scrapped the popular, "Be All you can be". SMA Hall changed it to a, "Army of One". In midsummer of 1999 the Army unveiled the Sergeant Major of the

Army unveiled Positional Colors. Never before had an enlisted position of any service had its own representational flag.

The twelfth Sergeant Major of The Army Jack E. Tilley also this was the first time a female was nominated for this position. SMA Tilley came through the ranks as a Calvary man. In January 2001 SMA Tilley held the first ever Sergeant Major of the Army nomination Command Sergeant Major Conference a week long gathering at the US Army Sergeant Major Academy at Fort Bliss. The best was formally transitioned on the Army's 226th Birthday, an event marked by ceremonies across the army. SMA Tilley started the selection of younger NCOs to attend the Sergeant Major Academy one of his focused on better pay for the enlisted soldiers and their families.

The thirteen Sergeant Major of The Army Kenneth o. Preston is the current SMA.

Closing the career and life of the men who served as Sergeant Major of the Army are both inspirational and instructive, for though them we gain an appreciation not just for the SMAs themselves, but for all the enlisted men and women who over the past two and a half centuries have work, fought, and sacrificed to make the Army the finest military organization in the world.