

HTraining and Educating the Non-Commissioned Officer

History and Contributions by Sergeants Major of the Army

SGM Stephen P. Carroll NRC-33

George Washington led his untrained Continental Army into Valley Forge during the harsh winter of 1778 to prepare for what would be a historic moment in military and American History; the Battle of Yorktown. Washington's troops had experienced three years of defeat at the hands of British forces due to lack of discipline, morale, and training in tactics that were required for survival and victory. Soldiers of the American Army, until that point, were trained by commissioned officers. Training lacked emphasis on discipline, a decentralized form of leadership, and other necessary components that would eventually become tenets of the non-commissioned officer (NCO) Corp. The training that took place in the austere environment of Valley Forge, was arguably a for-shadowing and precedent to the on-going need the Army would have to train and educate leaders. History reveals the genesis, of training NCO's to be effective and adaptive leaders, is the work of a former Prussian infantry officer Baron Von Steuben. Von Steuben, who had accepted a commission under General George Washington's command, established the NCO Corp. Leaders were trained, at that time, in European tactics that were necessary to defeat the King's Army and render independence to a nation that was on the verge of establishing a constitutional framework and representative form of government. (Cox, 1995) The NCO Corp has been evolving since the early days of our nations birth and adapting to the requirements that both war and peacekeeping missions demand of soldiers and leaders. In essence, today's Army and the NCO Corp, must be trained and ready for *"full spectrum, capabilities based operations,*

for deployments and mission” around the world. (Sergeant Major of the Army, Kenneth O.Preston)

Since the early days of 1778, the education and training of the NCO Corp has become tradition and doctrine as the Army views the world and the challenges that will be undertaken by its primary leaders and trainers. A host of books, field manuals, regulations, publications, conferences, forums and academies have all been written and established for the sole purpose of educating and training the NCO. In addition, the Sergeants Major of the Army (SMA), have made significant and continuous contributions to structuring, and modernizing educational standards and methods. For example, SMA George W. Dunaway, who served at the nations second SMA from 1968-1970, was instrumental in the creation of our present day, non-commissioned officer education system (NCOES). During SMA Dunaway’s tenure, the Chief of Staff approved the NCOES as a three-tiered system that trained NCOs in basic, advanced, and senior level courses (NCO Matters, Dunaway). From the Revolutionary War through our nation’s 230 year history this paper will explore the evolution of how NCO’s have been trained to keep pace with the changes in war-fighting requirements and briefly investigate the educational contributions made specifically by the SMA. (Appendix)

Very little standardization of NCO duties or responsibilities existed in the early days of the American Revolution. In 1778, during the long hard winter at Valley Forge, Friedrich von Steuben standardized NCO duties and responsibilities with his *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States* (printed in 1779). Among other things this work, commonly called the “Blue Book”, set down the duties and responsibilities for corporals, sergeants, first sergeants, quartermaster

sergeants, and sergeants major, which were the NCO ranks of the period. It also emphasized the importance of selecting quality soldiers for NCO positions. (Cox,1995)

The Sergeant Major served as the assistant to the regimental adjutant. He kept rosters, formed details, and handled matters concerning the interior management and discipline of the regiment. The Quartermaster Sergeant assisted the regimental quartermaster and supervised the proper loading and transport of the regiment's baggage when on march. The First Sergeant enforced discipline, instilled a sense of duty among troops, maintained the duty roster, and made morning report to the company commander. Sergeants and Corporals were expected to instruct recruits in all matters of military training, including the order of their behavior with respect to neatness and sanitation. In addition, those who were involved in outbreaks of disturbance or disobedience, were required to be punished. Though somewhat general and crude by today's standards, the NCO's role of trainer and enforcer of discipline, was clearly being established.

In the late 1700's, the Army was enlarged with the professional soldiers forming the basis for expansion. In addition, the system of relying heavily on quickly formed untrained militia , was recognized as a weakness and situation that needed to be addressed. The War of 1812 introduced the need for and the value of the trained citizen soldier. For example, when the US declared war on Britain in June of 1812, the regular Army numbered 11,744 men however there were 694,000 additional men within the state controlled militias. In 1813, the governor of Kentucky was called upon to raise 200 men for the invasion on Canada. Those forces, combined with regulars and Pennsylvania militia defeated the British and Indian forces they opposed at the Battle of Thames. Once again, training and education proved that even the citizen soldier could be a vital part of

the war effort. This action further revealed that it would continue to take trained, professional soldiers to win on the battlefield. Arguably, the non-commissioned officer educational system as we know it today had its seeds sown in the camps and wood-lines of the early American landscape.

The Civil War marked a radical change in American warfare as men opposed one another within the confines of American soil. Organizational and tactical changes led the Army to employ more open battle formations as the war progressed. These changes further enhanced the combat leadership role of the non-commissioned officer and emphasized that education was a dynamic rather than a static process.

In the post-Civil War era the Artillery School at Fort Monroe opened its doors to train both commissioned and non-commissioned officers. Likewise, in 1870 the Signal Corp established a school for training NCO's alongside officer counterparts. The Artillery and Signal schools were the first established due to the advanced technical knowledge needed to operate complex equipment and instruments. Efforts to provide advanced education for NCO's in other less technical fields, however, failed to win support. It was felt, for example, that field and hands on experience was more beneficial than the classroom for the purposes of grooming infantry sergeants.

The increase of technology, which accompanied modernization, had a significant impact on the NCO Corps during the early part of the 20th Century. The number of NCO ranks grew rapidly and, for the first time, the Army was required to compete with industry for technical workers. In response, Congress approved a pay bill in 1908, which financially rewarded those in technical fields as a means to maintain their services. The duties of the noncommissioned officer were also more clearly defined during this period

when the 417 page Noncommissioned Officers Manual was written (1909) replacing five or six pages of instructions provided by von Steuben's "Blue Book". This manual provided the NCO with guidance on how to administer punishment and discipline and ensured that treatment of lower grade personnel should be uniform, just, and should in no way be humiliating.

The outbreak of World War I required that training be conducted on a scale never experienced by U.S. forces. Corporals were the primary trainers during this period, with lessons emphasizing weapons and daytime maneuvers. General Pershing suggested that special schools for sergeants, and separate NCO messes, be established in order to align the prestige of the non-commissioned officer with those of European allies. The subsequent performance of non-commissioned officers in the American Expeditionary Force seemed to validate these changes.

With the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the United States once again found itself at war with an enemy that would need to be engaged on foreign soil. The Army realized a shortfall of available men and leaders that lacked training and experience. During that period, if a man showed potential, he was usually promoted to the rank of corporal or sergeant. Success was ultimately achieved in both the European and Pacific theatres despite shortcomings in formal training programs,

In the post-World War II era, a new emphasis began on training and educating the NCO to keep pace with technological changes. Two programs; a Career Guidance Plan and professional schools that incorporated service wide standards for training and selecting NCO's, were established. These modifications and opportunities encouraged the young soldier to become better educated in order to advance.

On 17 December 1949 the first class enrolled in the 2nd Constabulary Brigade's NCO school located at Munich, Germany. A short time later, the US Seventh Army took over the 2nd Constabulary functions and the school was named the Seventh Army Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

In 1950, an unprepared United States found it needed to commit large numbers of troops in a nation a half a world away. However, the NCO that would set foot in the hills and valleys of Korea was a much better prepared soldier than those who fought in WW II due to the educational processes that preceded the conflict. By the year 1952, the Army had developed the Army Education Program providing a number of ways for enlisted men to obtain a high school diploma or college degree. Emphasis on NCO education increased to the point that by 1959 over 180,000 soldiers attended NCO academies that were located in the continental United States. (Arms)

Today's Non-commissioned Officer Educational System is a product of lessons learned and contributions made by the Sergeants Major of the Army. In 1966, Army Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson chose Sergeant Major William O. Wooldridge as the first Sergeant Major of the Army. The SMA was that of an advisor and consultant to the Chief of Staff on enlisted matters. He identified problems affecting enlisted personnel and recommended appropriate solutions. In the last half of FY 1971, under the leadership of SMA Woolridge, the Army implemented the Non-commissioned Officer Education System. This progressive system was, and is currently designed, to educate NCOs on subjects and skills needed to enhance their individual performance and leadership abilities. The emphasis placed on educating the NCO, increased in 1986 with the issuance of MILPO Message Number 86-65. This message established the Primary Leadership

Development Course as a mandatory prerequisite for promotion to Staff Sergeant. This was the first time a NCOES course actually became mandatory for promotion. In 1987, the Army's interest in the NCO educational process, was clearly defined by the completion of a new Sergeants Major Academy building. The 125,000 square foot structure allowed the Academy to expand course loads and number of courses. (Arms) Today, the Warrior Leadership Course (WLC), Basic Non-Commissioned Officer Course (BNCOC), Advanced Non-Commissioned Officer Course (ANCOC), and the United States Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA), comprise a progressive system of educating junior and senior NCO's in common core subjects (written by the USASMA at Ft. Bliss, Texas) and those specific to the individual's career management field. The USASMA also operates and writes curriculum for the First Sergeants Course and the Battle Staff NCO Course.

The Noncommissioned Officer Education System will continue to adapt to the requirements of modern warfare, provide the student with a historical sense of how the NCO Corp has evolved, and teach the tactics and leadership skills required to be successful both on and off the battlefield. The duties and responsibilities of the NCO, outlined by Von Steuben in the Blue Book, will always serve as the foundation for the educational experience. In addition, the wisdom and contributions of the SMA will always be sought after as a means for continuously improving the training experience assuring that the NCO is prepared as an effective and competent leader. Without question, the SMA has made a significant contribution to the education of the NCO Corp and the professionalism and capabilities of the United States Army.

Appendix

The SMA has a proud tradition of impacting training and education for the NCO.

2nd SMA - George W. Dunaway 1968 - 70

During SMA Dunaway's tenure, the Chief of Staff approved the Noncommissioned Officer Education System (NCOES), a three-tiered system that trained NCOs in basic, advanced, and senior courses. The capstone was the Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas, which trained master sergeants for duty as sergeants major at battalion level and above.

3rd SMA - Silas L. Copeland 1970 – 73

SMA Copeland's proudest accomplishment, however, was having influenced "the noncommissioned officer corps to alter their method of operating," persuading "noncommissioned officers to change their thinking and leading of troops; and to treat a human being as a human being, with dignity and respect."

5th SMA - William G. Bainbridge 1975-1979

Among the accomplishments of his term as Sergeant Major of the Army, SMA Bainbridge felt proudest of securing permanent funding for the Noncommissioned Officer Education System. SMA Bainbridge was instrumental in having senior NCOs placed on the general staff to which he himself was appointed by General Bernard Rogers.

6th SMA - William A. Connelly 1979-1983

He drafted the regulation establishing the Noncommissioned Officer Development Program, which created a roadmap of NCO professional development, outlining education requirements and tightening standards of performance.

8th SMA - Julius W. Gates 1987-1991

To SMA Gates, training remained the Army's most critical issue. The NCO Battle Staff Course, a new NCO Evaluation Report, and the Self-Development Test- a replacement for the Skill Qualification Test- were firmly established during SMA Gates' tenure. Working closely with Chief of Staff General Carl E. Vuono, SMA Gates assisted with the success of the "Year of Training" followed by the "Year of the NCO." SMA Gates believed that a strong NCO corps was critical for a strong Army. He regarded with pride the many accomplishments made during his term of office, including the first NCO historical volume, *The Story of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps*; the introduction of Army Field Manual 25-101, *Battle Focused Training*, which defined the training role of the noncommissioned officer; and the launching of the *NCO Journal* as an official publication; Operation JUST CAUSE (December 1989) and Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM (August 1990-April 1991.)

WORKS CITED

NCO Guide, 5th Edition, revised by 1SG Frank Cox, USA Ret. (1995) p.13

Sergeant Major of the Army, Kenneth O. Preston, Interview aired on the Pentagon Channel (July 06)

NCO Matters; SMA Contributions, 2nd SMA George Dunaway, www.ausa.org;

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE US ARMY NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER;
L.R. Arms; Director, NCO Museum, www.ArmyStudyGuide.com , pg #38, (not dated)