The Sergeants Major of the Army
On Leadership and the Profession of Arms

Institute of Land Warfare
Association of the United States Army
On Leadership and the Profession of Arms

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During the Association of the United States Army’s Annual Meeting in 2008, the Secretary of the Army announced that 2009 would be designated as the Year of the NCO to recognize the vital contribution of noncommissioned officers as the backbone of the Army throughout its long and storied history.

An important milestone for the NCO Corps was the establishment of the position of Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA) in July 1980. The Soldiers who have served as SMA have well over 400 years’ experience among them, from World War II through the war on terrorism. Their influence on the Army leadership has helped shape our NCO Corps into the not-so-secret weapon of America’s Army and the envy of other armies around the world—friend and foe alike.

The Army and its NCO Corps have changed a great deal since 14 June 1775. The Noncommissioned Officer Education System, with the Sergeants Major Academy as its capstone, is one of the many changes that have profoundly transformed the NCO Corps. We now have the best trained, best educated and most professional NCO Corps in the history of our great Army, and the thirteen individuals who have served as Sergeant Major of the Army deserve a great deal of the credit.

The Sergeants Major of the Army: On Leadership and the Profession of Arms, compiled by Marianna Merrick Yamamoto, was first published by AUSA’s Institute of Land Warfare in 1996. This edition includes the words of the three Sergeants Major of the Army who have served since that time. It marks the occasion of the Year of the NCO and captures some of the wisdom of these thirteen great noncommissioned officers—words that might otherwise be lost forever—and includes tributes from those who have served with them and appreciate how invaluable the SMA is to the NCO Corps. Officers and NCOs alike will benefit from these thoughts, and every NCO should have a copy as part of his or her professional library.

“Still Serving.”

Jimmie W. Spencer
CSM, U.S. Army Retired
Director, Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier Programs
Association of the U.S. Army

14 June 2009
The Sergeant Major of the Army

Established in 1966, the title Sergeant Major of the Army designates the senior sergeant major insignia of rank and represents the senior enlisted position of the Army. The sergeant major in this position serves as the senior enlisted advisor and consultant to the Chief of Staff of the Army.

The SMA provides information on the problems affecting enlisted personnel and proposed solutions to these problems; on standards, professional development, growth, and advancement of NCOs; and on morale, training, pay, promotions and quality of life for Soldiers and family members.

—Training Circular 22-6,
The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide, 1990

Symbolism of the Sergeant Major of the Army Chevrons

The stripes, stars and American Eagle represent every enlisted rank in the Army. The American Eagle symbolizes the Army’s linkage to the nation and the Sergeant Major’s link to the Chief of Staff of the Army and to the enlisted Soldiers. The American Eagle was chosen because of its prominence throughout the Army. It is found on the Army’s hat brass, dress uniform buttons, unit colors, the Specialist rank, the Command Sergeant Major collar brass and the SMA’s distinctive shield. A portion of the American Eagle, our nation’s symbol, is now depicted in the rank insignia of every service’s senior enlisted representative, symbolizing an era of increased joint operations.
The NCO Creed

No one is more professional than I. I am a Noncommissioned Officer, a leader of Soldiers. As a Noncommissioned Officer, I realize that I am a member of a time honored corps, which is known as “The Backbone of the Army.” I am proud of the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers and will at all times conduct myself so as to bring credit upon the Corps, the Military Service and my country regardless of the situation in which I find myself. I will not use my grade or position to attain pleasure, profit or personal safety.

Competence is my watchword. My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind—accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my Soldiers. I will strive to remain technically and tactically proficient. I am aware of my role as a Noncommissioned Officer. I will fulfill my responsibilities inherent in that role. All Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership; I will provide that leadership. I know my Soldiers and I will always place their needs above my own. I will communicate consistently with my Soldiers and never leave them uninformed. I will be fair and impartial when recommending both rewards and punishment.

Officers of my unit will have maximum time to accomplish their duties; they will not have to accomplish mine. I will earn their respect and confidence as well as that of my Soldiers. I will be loyal to those with whom I serve; seniors, peers and subordinates alike. I will exercise initiative by taking appropriate action in the absence of orders. I will not compromise my integrity, nor my moral courage. I will not forget, nor will I allow my comrades to forget that we are professionals, Noncommissioned Officers, leaders!
Accomplishing the Mission

A professional . . . is a dynamic growing being who has learned from the past, acts in the present, but above all, he focuses on accomplishing his mission.

—SMA George W. Dunaway,
“Let’s PULL Together,” Army Digest,
June 1969, p. 28

Throughout my career I have observed that great leaders at all levels focus on the mission. . . . Good units and good leaders get the job accomplished: they get it done by working hard and concentrating on the basics.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Hard Work, Leadership Still Keys to Quality,”
ARMY, October 1984, pp. 51-52

Always tell Soldiers to “stay in your lane.” Now, probably more than any other time, you need to stay in your lane. If you’re worried about what everybody else is doing you’re not focused on your Soldiers.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference,
AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition,
6 October 2003

Because the division commander took the time to bring his command sergeant major into the process, he brought the rest of the division’s NCOs into the plan as well. Immediately, the NCOs understood that in order for the officers of their unit to be successful, the necessary control measures had to be in place to meet the commander’s objective. From that, we leveraged every available technology, technique, procedure and leadership skill to achieve success.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“Meeting Leadership Challenges as a Team,”

The purpose of leadership is to accomplish the mission—to get the job done. This challenge to get the job accomplished is the same whether a Soldier is a squad leader, a leader in a staff assignment or a company first sergeant. This challenge also applies
whether the people being led are active duty Soldiers, Army Reservists, National Guardsmen, civilians or retirees.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell, "NCOs Are the 'Vital Link in the Chain of Command.'" ARMY, October 1985, p. 64

One of the strengths of our great Army is the unique ability of our Soldiers to rise to the occasion and get the job done, no matter what the adversities or the situation, during war and peace.


This war on terrorism is going to last a long time. . . . Some of the safety measures have prevented something else from happening. If I do have a concern it is the fact that as time goes on we get complacent. . . . So I’d ask you to not allow yourself to get complacent. Stay focused on what you’re doing.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley, Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 2002

The Army and the Nation

About my fifteenth or sixteenth year of service, that peculiar chemistry made up of training, experience and promotion began to have its effect, and I realized that I didn’t want to be anywhere else but the Army.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge, Top Sergeant, 1995, p. 345

The military is . . . a reflection of American society.


Six fundamental imperatives . . . continue to mold the Army: maintain a quality force; maintain a solid warfighting doctrine; maintain the mix of armored, light and special operations forces required by national strategy; conduct tough, realistic training; continuously modernize to
improve war-fighting capabilities; and develop competent, confident leaders.


Our Army is only as strong as we want to make it.


Soldiers are . . . members of a profession of arms which has existed virtually unchanged for thousands of years—far longer than most other human institutions have existed. The Army has done so because of its unique character—a uniqueness based primarily upon intangibles that cannot be “costed.”


It will take the hearts, hands and heads of every Soldier to build a better Army.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland, “The SMA Talks to the Troops Man to Man,” Soldiers, December 1971, p. 4

The ideal of honorable service which we instill in our Soldiers today will lay the foundation for a better Army in the future.

—SMA George W. Dunaway, “‘People Benefits’ Will Get More Emphasis in ’70s,” ARMY, October 1970, p. 35

We serve for love of the Army and mainly love of country.


Tell your good news stories. We cannot rely on the media to tell the good news stories, so we must do it ourselves.

For those of you who have deployed, take pride in talking to family and friends about your accomplishments; they are commendable and
noteworthy. We are the greatest Army the world has every known. We should be proud to speak positively of all we do.


The Army, like any other dynamic business, must constantly look critically at its own structure and procedures.


Our Army is truly in touch with America every day, in some way or another.


Those people who want to cut the defense budget to the bone need to realize that when we get involved in conflict, the youth of America will pay for our short-sightedness. They’re the ones who will have to hold the ground.


No matter how difficult times are . . . those of us who love the Army must stick with it.


Since the American Army’s birth in 1775, the fate of the nation has often rested in the capable hands of its Soldiers. From Yorktown to Gettysburg to Normandy to the Persian Gulf, to discovering and building a nation and protecting others from aggression, ultimately, it is the Army that decides our success in war and peace—because we are the force of decision.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney, address at MacDill Air Force Base, 10 May 1996 (SMA files, p. 2)

We serve our nation—our people—for the devotion, faith and trust we place in our free,
democratic system of government. . . Everyone in our nation must understand why young men and women serve in our armed forces and why they put up with the hardships of Army life and are willing to lay their lives on the line to protect the greatest nation ever created and known to mankind.


Our Soldiers come from all walks of life, from all across America. They represent many different races, ethnicities and religious groups. Our diversity is our greatest strength, and knowing how to communicate with people from all ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds is critical to our success.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston, “Soldiers: America’s Strength,” ARMY, October 2008, p. 34

The American public expects a Soldier to look like an American Soldier. We represent the American public and they expect us to look sharp and be true professionals. Their tax dollars support our Army and they want a visible expression of a good investment.


The Soldier is a representative of everything that our nation stands for.


[Being in the Army means a] total commitment to a higher calling, devotion to duty and a thousand other adjectives.


Why is the Army the strength of the nation? Because of our people.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston, SMA Awards Luncheon, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, 6 October 2008
Caring

Soldiers . . . will do anything their leaders ask if they are convinced it is important and that their leaders care.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
“The Soldier Remains Our Ultimate Weapon,”
ARMY, October 1979, p. 24

We talk about leadership and say that to be a good leader you must have candor, commitment, courage and competence. If you truly care . . . you will do all those things. If you care about our nation, if you care about the Army, if you care about the Soldiers and their families, you’ll ensure you possess those qualities.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
“SMA Speaks about Promotions, Leadership,”
Korus, April 1995, p. 7

Those units that have the fewest incidents are those whose noncommissioned officers really know their men and take a personal interest in their welfare.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,
“The NCO Must Grow with the Army,”
ARMY, October 1972, p. 24

You spend half your life taking care of Soldiers and all of a sudden you turn around and find out that all along they’ve been taking care of you.

—GEN William B. Rosson, quoted by SMA William G. Bainbridge,
Top Sergeant, 1995, p. 135

People—not personnel—will be my major concern.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,
“First Look at a New Job,”
ARMY, October 1966, p. 43

Needed improvements will occur if officers and NCOs remember to take care of their Soldiers. If you take care of your Soldiers, they will always take care of you.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
“Our Business Is Soldiers, Says Departing SMA,”
Army Times, 4 July 1983, p. 2
Our medical system is one of the finest in the world. It’s up to every NCO to support this system and make it work. If you don’t know the sergeant major at your hospital or the NCOIC at your Troop Medical Clinic, call them, visit them. Talk to them, sergeant-to-sergeant, about your Soldiers’ medical care. Invite them to talk to your Soldiers and their families about Army medical care. That’s sergeant’s business.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,  
“Sergeant to Sergeant,” Sergeants’ Business,  
May-June 1986, p. 3

In our Army every Soldier must care about his job. Often—if the duty seems menial or humdrum—it is hard to cultivate this attitude. But it must be done. . . . What you do in your job each day, you do for the Army.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,  
“The Soldier Who Cares,”  
Army Digest, December 1966, p. 5

I believe consistent and fair counseling and effective communication up and down the chain of command are key ingredients in motivating Soldiers. Taking care of Soldiers and their families is nonnegotiable.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,  
“The American GI—Person of the Century: ‘Our Heritage and Legacy,’”  
ARMY, October 2000, p. 34

Do you care about your Soldiers? . . . Soldiers want to know that you focus on them and not up the chain of command for self-promotion or toward your next assignment.

—SMA Robert E. Hall,  
“Focus on Fundamentals of Soldiering in These Tough, Turbulent Times,”  
ARMY, October 1998, p. 30

Take care of each man as though he were your own brother—he is.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,  
“Understanding Soldier Problems,”  
Army Digest, April 1967, p. 5

The most valuable thing you can give someone is your time. Taking care of people means a lot of
things. It can mean listening, advising or making a correction when someone is making a mistake.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
“Farewell, SMA Tilley,”
Soldiers, December 2003, p. 16

The names of the Soldiers who cared—who have cared unceasingly since Continental Army days—are a matter of permanent record. They have been privates, sergeants, captains and generals. Rank is immaterial to caring. Sometimes they have given their lives; most of the time they give of their lives in performing their duty. . . . Every unit has a measure of these men, the Soldiers who care. They always seem to be on the job early in the morning, and often late at night. You can count on their reports. You can trust their judgments. They are by no means perfect, but they try, and they come through. They care about what they are doing. They care about the men around them. And men respond to this treatment. They perform better. They begin to care. They begin to understand what makes our Army tick—caring.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,
“The Soldier Who Cares,”
Army Digest, December 1966, p. 5

Challenge and Change

The six challenges we face to ensure the readiness of the Army . . . [are to] train our Soldiers to tough, measurable standards; standardize how we train; [make] good plans; train smart and share the load; focus on what is important; [and] train and coach subordinates.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
“NCOs: It’s Time to Get Tough,”
ARMY, October 1981, p. 29

I . . . ask everyone at every level to be excited and challenged by the changes and to let me know what ideas they have to suggest that will help all of us working together to build a better, more professional Army.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,
“Let’s Build a Better Army,”
Soldiers, July 1971, p. 7
The equipment and the weaponry will continually change and improve, and the size of the military will expand as needed, decreasing during times of peace. But the unyielding will of the Soldier and the dedication of professional military leaders will not change.

—SMA George W. Dunaway, Center of Military History Interview, 1990, p. 66

Challenges . . . demand vigorous action and dedication by our NCO Corps. The accomplishment of these tasks rests at our Army’s “grass roots.”

—SMA Silas L. Copeland, “The NCO Must Grow with the Army,” ARMY, October 1972, p. 25

“Doers” are the true experts of the Army; if something does not work like the user manual claims it should, or if there is a better way to do it, then the NCO Corps should change the book. We cannot be satisfied with just changing the way of doing something in our units, but must ensure that the idea is standardized throughout the Army.


The Soldier wants to know why . . . . Credible answers often require reevaluation of traditional ways of doing things to make sure that they are based on sound logic and judgment. If so, they should be explainable. If not, they should be changed.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland, “The NCO Must Grow with the Army,” ARMY, October 1972, p. 25

A leader does not “choose” the best or most opportune time in which to lead. A good leader takes the challenge whenever and wherever it presents itself and does the best he or she can.


“There are two types of change: change that happens to us and changes we make happen,” [said Secretary of Defense, William J. Perry]. I’d say
that the changing environment in which we operate is change that has happened to us, as an Army, and change isn’t all bad because it provides us opportunities which allow for that second type of change—the change we make happen. Either way, we must seize the opportunities that are created by change.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney, 
address at Fort Leonard Wood, 26 April 1996 (SMA files, p. 3)

The big challenge for NCOs at all levels, from division right on down to fire team leader, is to keep the morale of the Soldier boosted. If his morale is good, his fighting ability is good.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland, 
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 76

The greatness of our Army has always been the ability of our Soldiers who serve in the ranks to rise to the challenge against the odds, in the face of danger, and win.

—SMA Julius W. Gates, 
"From the Top," Army Trainer, Fall 1989, p. 2

It goes without saying that I am obliged to base my recommendations to the Army leadership on my knowledge of rules and regulations. However, I exist in order to sense when this rule or that rule is in need of change.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd, 
"Top NCO Says Job Is Communicating,” The Mercury, February 1994, p. 8

Don’t be afraid of change. Move smartly with the times as long as military order and discipline are not jeopardized.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland, 
"Let’s Build a Better Army,” Soldiers, July 1971, p. 7

Character and Doing What’s Right

Remember—managers do things right, and leaders do the right thing.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney, 
Command, Leadership, and Effective Staff Support, 15 October 1995, p. 194
I don’t know what possesses a professional who has been around five, ten, or 20 years to turn his or her back and walk away from a deficiency. The first tenet of our behavior as professionals must be to never do this.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
“NCOs: It’s Time to Get Tough,”
ARMY, October 1981, p. 31

We want the Army to be society’s model of fair treatment. We want to assure that all Soldiers are treated fairly, not because it is necessary but because it is right.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,
“Let’s Build a Better Army,” Soldiers, July 1971, p. 5

We build character . . . in order for us to withstand the rigors of combat and resist the temptations to compromise our principles in peacetime. We must build character in peacetime because there is no time in war.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“What Soldiering Is All About,”
ARMY, October 1986, p. 40

Are you truly doing what’s best for the nation, what’s best for the Army, what’s best for your unit, what’s best for your Soldiers and their families? Are you taking all of that into consideration, or are you looking at what makes you as an individual look the best?

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
“Lessons on Leadership,”
Soldiers, February 1995, p. 20

A code of ethics . . . cannot be developed overnight by edict or official pronouncement. It is developed by years of practice and performance of duty according to high ethical standards. It must be self-policing. Without such a code, a professional Soldier or a group soon loses its identity and effectiveness.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,
“The NCO Must Grow with the Army,”
ARMY, October 1972, p. 24

An African proverb states: “If you don’t know who you are, anyone can name you. And, if anyone can name you, you’ll answer to anything.” . . . If
you do not know who you are, how can you know your Soldiers? If you do not know your Soldiers—which includes your NCOs—how can you perform the mission properly? In my opinion, you cannot and you will not, or you will be unsuccessful because you will answer to what you think should be said or done and not to what is right.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,  
“Meeting Leadership Challenges as a Team,”  

Everywhere you look—on the fields of athletic competition, in combat training operations and in civilian communities—Soldiers are doing what is right.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,  
“The Thunder of a Mighty Fighting Force,”  
*ARMY*, October 1988, p. 41

The easy way is not necessarily the best way.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,  
“The NCO: More Vital Than Ever to Readiness,”  
*ARMY*, October 1983, p. 30

What each of us does each day is important to our country and the world, and it is something we should all take pride in and never take for granted.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,  
“Speaking for Soldiers As Their Supporter and Advocate,”  
*ARMY*, October 2001, p. 40

Among the things I’ve learned during my career is that you must be honest with everyone about everything.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,  
“Sergeant to Sergeant,”  
*Sergeants’ Business*, May-June 1987, p. 4

One aspect of pride is personal integrity.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,  
“We Have Met the Challenge,”  
*ARMY*, October 1978, p. 27

Character . . . is the most important quality you can find in any person, but especially in a Soldier. It is the foundation that will get anybody through anything he may encounter.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,  
“Performance, Character and Contact,”  
*Soldiers*, January 1984, p. 7
Once we know our job, have a genuine code of ethics, and maintain unquestioned personal integrity, we have met the first and most demanding challenge of leadership.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,
“The NCO Must Grow with the Army,”
ARMY, October 1972, p. 25

We must show [Soldiers] what “right looks like.”

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“Meeting Leadership Challenges as a Team,”

There is no place in “our Army” for those who sexually harass or intimidate others, or whose use of alcohol or drugs degrades themselves and the Soldiers around them.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“The NCO: More Vital Than Ever to Readiness,”
ARMY, October 1983, p. 30

Cohesion

Nothing wrong with having a clique, so long as everybody’s in it.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,
Top Sergeant, 1995, p. 163

Soldiers’ ability to sustain themselves and their fellow Soldiers during periods of high stress is built upon rock-hard confidence in themselves and their leadership chain beginning with fire team leaders or the noncommissioned officer of their section. . . . What we have learned and relearned in our Army is that unit cohesion and teamwork are what give individual Soldiers the confidence to use initiative, to be resourceful and to be all they can be.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“What Soldiering Is All About,”
ARMY, October 1986, pp. 41-42

[SMA] George Dunaway’s motivation to join the National Guard reflected the great strength of that institution—unit cohesion.

—Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 55
Where there is no involvement, there is no commitment.


In order for this country to survive and for our families, loved ones and the American people to continue to enjoy the freedoms we hold dear, we must strengthen our personal development, our bonding to others (unit cohesion, family ties), and strengthen our commitment to our country, Constitution and profession.


That unbreakable bond that develops between Soldiers . . is at the very heart of our profession.

—GEN Carl E. Vuono, address at the retirement review in honor of SMA Julius W. Gates, *Collected Works of the Thirty-first Chief of Staff, United States Army*, 1991, p. 381

**Combat**

Everyone’s afraid [in combat]. It’s a matter of understanding your fear and controlling it. You’re a member of a team, a squad, and if you get into trouble, you’ve got a lot of help, good equipment and good support.


Since 1775, generations of American citizens have worn the uniform of a Soldier and fought at home and on foreign soil . . . Today our Soldiers chase terrorists over the 12,000-foot mountaintops of Afghanistan and carry out precision attacks in the cities and towns of Iraq. The men and women of our Army have protected millions of Iraqi and Afghan citizens as they voted. Now they are building roads, bridges, schools and hospitals, and are providing water and electricity to the people of these nations. The mission and the theater of
operation may change, but throughout the world, our Soldiers are still those boots on the ground who answer the call to duty.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston
“Soldiers: America’s Strength,” ARMY, October 2008, p. 34

Survival in combat is not solely a matter of luck. Doing things the right way is more important than luck in coming through a battle alive. And training teaches you to do things the right way.


[The] morale of the fighting force is the single most important aspect of any battle or war. Napoleon once said, “Morale makes up three-quarters of the game; the relative balance of manpower accounts for only the remaining quarter.”


One of the first things that will impress you when you get into your first firefight will be what an experienced combat veteran has described as “ordered confusion.” . . . Many things happen in the heat of battle which do not go according to plan. In this respect a maneuver on the battlefield is something like a football game. If everything went exactly according to plan, the offensive team would score a touchdown on every play.

When something happens that really disrupts our plans, Soldiers say that things are “snafu.” Nobody seems to know what’s going on up ahead or to the flanks. Communication with other units is out—or more likely hasn’t been established. The terrain doesn’t seem to match what is expected from a study of the map. A couple of landmarks may have been identified—but not where they’re supposed to be. If movement is made by truck, traffic may be snarled.

Frequently, a change in our plans causes this confusion. Sometimes the enemy forces us to change our plans (he’s pretty smart, too) but more often we change our plans to take advantage of a
new situation. We do this to surprise the enemy or hit him where he is weakest. This ability to change our plans is one of our greatest strengths.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,
"Headed for Combat,"
Army Digest, January 1968, pp. 6-7

Young noncommissioned officers are the ones who call the shots; it is on their knowledge, initiative and courage that our success in battle rests.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“The NCO: More Vital Than Ever to Readiness,”
ARMY, October 1983, p. 28

You can almost count on it, the weather will be too hot, too cold, too dry or too wet.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,
“Headed for Combat,"
Army Digest, January 1968, p. 9

Our Soldiers can do a great deal more under pressure than people think. You’d have to see them perform in combat to believe it.

—SMA George W. Dunaway,
Center of Military History Interview, 1990, p. 41

No man ever adjusts himself perfectly to battle, regardless of how much combat he’s seen. Veteran Soldiers also experience . . . reactions caused by fear. The difference is that veterans have learned to control their fears better than green troops.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,
“Headed for Combat,"
Army Digest, January 1968, p. 10

Training, then—both good and bad—is habit forming. The difference is that one develops the battlefield habits that win; the other gets you killed.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“As the SMA Sees It,”
Army Trainer, Fall 1984, p. 21

How can fear help you? Fear is not altogether undesirable. It is nature’s way of preparing your body for battle. As a consequence, the body automatically undergoes certain changes. You may
temporarily lose a sense of fatigue, no matter how tired you are. . . . Fear . . . can stimulate your body, make you more alert, and prepare you for unusual physical effort. . . .

One of the easiest things to do is to talk to someone. Talk is a convenient way to relieve your tension—and it also helps the men you’re talking to. . . . It’s a reminder that the rest of the team is with you. Your confidence goes up and your fear goes down when you think of the coming fight as a team job. You know the striking power of the team. . . .

Action or “doing something” will also help you overcome the initial paralyzing effect of fear in combat. This is especially true when you’re waiting for battle and the suspense is bothering you. Put your fear aside by doing something—even if you have to make work for yourself. . . . The act of firing not only helps you overcome fear but it also helps defeat the enemy. . . . Learn to control it and make it work for you.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,
“headed for combat,”
Army Digest, January 1968, pp. 10-11

A Soldier always wants the best to be at his front, rear, right and left, trained to stay there regardless of what may happen.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
letter to M. M. Yamamoto, 15 May 1996

Waiting . . . the old Soldier finds good use for this time. He cleans his weapon or his equipment, makes his position better, or just relaxes. . . . Make the best use of your time.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,
“headed for Combat,”
Army Digest, January 1968, p. 9

Properly used, the weather can help us. Fog can provide a natural “smoke screen” for attacking troops—without benefit of artillery or mortar smoke shells. We can’t change the weather but we can make it work for us.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,
“headed for Combat,”
Army Digest, January 1968, p. 9
Command Presence

[On visits ask: Are the Soldiers] properly fed? Do they have the equipment? Do they have ammunition? Do they have weapons? Are they operable? How’s their morale? How can I support you?

—SMA Silas L. Copeland, Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 76

[It is important to visit] the “two-four-sixes,” the detachments of only two people here or four there or six over that way.

—SMA William A. Bainbridge, Top Sergeant, 1995, p. 201

I usually approach Soldiers by telling them about where I came from and how I came up through the ranks. Then I’ll tell a funny story to put them at ease a little bit before having them ask me questions or tell me about things. Then I listen—it’s important to listen very carefully. . . .

The unit will usually have a schedule for me, but sometimes I will just go off and see someone I notice in the area. This keeps people on their toes and is a good way to get feedback.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell, “Performance, Character and Contact,” Soldiers, January 1984, p. 7

My job is to visit with Soldiers, talk to Soldiers and find out the things we need to do for them.


I believed in visiting troop units all over the globe, particularly small units in remote locations.


When you walk around, don’t say “because I’m a young Soldier, I’m not good enough,” about anything. Flex a little bit. Be proud of who you are. . . . Tell people how good you are. When you
wear that beret, wear it correctly. Don’t hold your head down. Be powerful. Be who you are—a good Soldier. Somebody asks you who you are, don’t say “I’m a tanker,” “I’m an infantryman,” “I’m a mechanic.” . . . Tell them I’m a Soldier, period, and I’m proud of who I am.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley, Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 2002

I wanted to be visible and I wanted Soldiers of all ranks to know there was someone who could hear their problems and go right to the top with problems that had merit.

—SMA George W. Dunaway, Center of Military History Interview, 1990, p. 38

The way . . . SMA [Julius W.] Gates deals with junior Soldiers puts them at ease, yet maintains their respect for both his rank and office, and one of his secrets to doing that is striking swiftly, not giving anybody time to be nervous.


When you go out and get a briefing from Soldiers, they will tell you all about their equipment. As soon as you say, “Tell me something about you,” there’s a sparkle in their eyes, their smile is larger. When you start showing and telling people how much you care about them, they won’t disappoint you.


If the first sergeant and sergeant major are tied to a desk, they are short-changing their NCOs and Soldiers. That should never be allowed to happen. I am not saying that first sergeants and sergeants major do not get involved in paperwork. Certainly they do. But they have to balance that desk time with field time.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell, “As the SMA Sees It,” Army Trainer, Fall 1984, p. 23
To gain a more accurate view of the pulse of the Army, [SMA Leon L. Van Autreve] would, after talking to groups of Soldiers, talk one-on-one with Soldiers of the Month, NCOs of the Month, and NCOs of the Quarter, that is, some of the most dedicated enlisted men. Once he got them to relax and open up, he was able to tap into the perspectives of Soldiers who were most apt to put the needs of the institution before their own personal wants.

—Gillespie et al., *The Sergeants Major of the Army*, 1995, p. 95

Stay in your box. Take care of the Soldiers that you need to take care of. Don’t worry about what [someone] is doing next to you... If you get so focused on what they’re doing, you can’t focus on what your responsibilities are.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley, Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 2000

**Communication and Counseling**

Young NCOs already make up the true backbone of today’s Army. They must stay focused and must inform, educate and prepare the leaders of tomorrow... I believe a key component to this process is regular and recurring counseling. Feedback is the breakfast of champions; I expected it as a young Soldier and NCO and I still do today.


Communication is dialogue—not monologue.


Many times... a leader will receive information, guidance or orders from above. He selects what he thinks is important and passes that to his subordinate who in turn does the same thing. By the time the word reaches the Soldiers who do the work, the only thing they get is “Do it!”
That’s necessary sometimes, but most of the time it’s not. NCOs, whenever possible, should take time to explain why. Soldiers will do anything you ask them to do if they know why, and why it’s important.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
“Chain of Command: It Links Private to President,” Soldiers, October 1979, p. 10

The burden of establishing [communication with the Soldier] rests upon the NCO.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,
“The NCO Must Grow with the Army,” ARMY, October 1972, p. 25

One of the things that bothered me about Vietnam was [that] we lost, I think, 58,000 people. One of the things we didn’t do very well was when Soldiers come back [from] Vietnam we did not track our disabled veterans very well. So I’d ask you, if you have a Soldier within your unit that’s been hurt or been wounded, that you assist him or her in any way you can and continue to track them.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, 6 October 2003

When I ask NCOs if they have counseled their Soldiers, I usually get a positive answer. But I bet that if I looked at the counseling statements, most—if not all—of them would be negative, indicating that the bad Soldier is getting most of the attention. What is wrong with a positive counseling statement for the good Soldier? And more importantly, what is wrong with paying more attention to the good Soldier? We certainly have the tools available today to turn our attention to the good Soldier.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
“Keep Up with Change in ‘80s,” ARMY, October 1982, p. 30

I’m very concerned about the operational tempo in the Army. . . . I’m concerned about safety. I’m concerned about divorce rates. I’m concerned about suicides. I’m concerned about a lot of things that tell me that . . . we’ve got to talk to each other
a lot more. You got to figure out ways to get down and talk to the junior Soldiers, and even talk to yourselves.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
AUSA Family Forum I,
AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition,
6 October 2003

Counseling tells Soldiers where they stand, and it helps them focus on their goals.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“Our Army—In Touch with America,”
ARMY, October 1995, p. 33

Along with counseling is suicide prevention. . . . If you look at a senior NCO you may say “Hey, [the stress] is not too bad,” [but] if you look at a young private or PFC it is pretty tough, because they’re [deploying] back-to-back, and they really don’t necessarily understand the kind of things you understand.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference,
AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition,
6 October 2003

As a leader, when the workday is over, there are other things that you have to do. You have to counsel those Soldiers that you want to keep and promote. They need some help—help that you can’t give them in your specified training time.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Looking to the Future,”
Sergeants’ Business, March 1986, p. 7

Communicate with your Soldiers, civilians and their families. This war will not be won quickly or easily. The principles of leadership we all studied for years revolved around communication in one form or another. Learn about transformation, rebalancing and force stabilization efforts.

Help educate Soldiers and families on the benefits and the road ahead. Talk about concerns, listen to issues and respond.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston,
“U.S. Soldiers—Ambassadors of Democracy,”
ARMY, October 2005, p. 38
Everybody . . . should be counseled at least once a month . . . We talk on e-mail too much. We don’t talk and look at each other in the face and talk about what the issues are. So counseling—sitting down and talking to Soldiers—is important.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,  
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 2002

It is absolutely the responsibility of the NCO to establish a working and talking rapport with his men. There can be little accomplishment without communication.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,  
“The Uses of Reveille,”  
Army Digest, November 1966, p. 5

I want leaders to ensure that their Soldiers are current on common tasks, inspected daily, counseled monthly, coached meaningfully, promoted when deserving and are cared for by a genuinely concerned chain of command. My experiences have taught me that Soldiers who receive this sort of attention are easy to spot. It shows in how they salute the flag during retreat, their attention to detail, the initiative they show, their confidence and personal bearing and in the enthusiasm and pride in what they do.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,  
“Speaking for Soldiers As Their Supporter and Advocate,” ARMY, October 2001, p. 40

Courage

Professional courage . . . is the steel fiber that makes an NCO unafraid and willing to tell it like it is.

—SMA William A. Connelly,  
“NCOs: It’s Time to Get Tough,”  
ARMY, October 1981, p. 31

The man who controls his fear and goes about his business despite it is a courageous man.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,  
“Headed for Combat,”  
Army Digest, January 1968, p. 10
It is the noncommissioned officer who must have the intestinal fortitude to recommend what is right, not what is easy.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
“Bootprints That Will Never Fade,”
ARMY, October 1990, p. 36

It takes guts for an NCO to use inherent authority and responsibility in training, maintaining, leading and caring for Soldiers.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“What Soldiering Is All About,”
ARMY, October 1986, p. 41

Moral courage, to me, is much more demanding than physical courage.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
“The Office of SMA—From Then to Now,”
The NCO Journal, Summer 1994, pp. 10-11

There’s no limit to what courage can accomplish on the battlefield.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,
“Headed for Combat,”
Army Digest, January 1968, p. 10

The concept of professional courage does not always mean being as tough as nails, either. It also suggests a willingness to listen to the Soldiers’ problems, to go to bat for them in a tough situation and it means knowing just how far they can go. It also means being willing to tell the boss when he is wrong.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
“NCOs: It’s Time to Get Tough,”
ARMY, October 1981, p. 31

Discipline

Total discipline overcomes adversity and physical stamina draws on an inner strength that says “drive on.”

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,
“First, and Getting Firster,”
ARMY, October 1975, p. 24

I think we need to get back to basic fundamentals of soldiering. Just tasks, conditions, standards,
and tough, realistic training. If we blink our young noncommissioned officers will get away from that because it’s hard work.

---SMA Robert E. Hall, Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 1998

Without self-discipline, a noncommissioned officer can never develop or maintain personal integrity.

---SMA Silas L. Copeland, “The NCO Must Grow with the Army,” ARMY, October 1972, p. 25

A disciplined Soldier is a well-dressed, sharp-looking Soldier, and represents his country in highest tradition.


The core of a Soldier is moral discipline. It is intertwined with the discipline of physical and mental achievement. It motivates doing on your own what is right without prodding . . . . It is an inner critic that refuses to tolerate less than your best.


Families

[During the tenure of Chief of Staff GEN Edward C. Meyer and SMA William A. Connelly] the old phrase, “If the Army wanted you to have a wife, it would have issued you one” was changed to “You recruit a Soldier, but reenlist a family.”

---Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 124

[Sending a married Soldier overseas with his family] is as necessary to readiness as spare parts.

It was extremely important to keep troops everywhere aware of how important their families were to them, and remind them that folks up the ladder cared about them and their families. . . . I would take my wife with me to most places where enlisted men had their families. The military wife is an important part of the Army, and it is essential that military wives receive proper recognition for the role they play in their husbands’ careers.

A happy Soldier performs his duties much better than an unhappy one. Most men are happier when they have their families with them, and I wanted to recognize these ladies and express appreciation, on behalf of Department of the Army, for the fine job they were doing. What better way could that be done than for me to demonstrate how important my wife was to me?

—SMA George W. Dunaway,
Center of Military History Interview, 1990, p. 37

When somebody . . . starts talking to you about what goes on in your community, you got to tell them [about the Army family]. We don’t flex enough in the Army. We don’t tell people our story. We’re sort of focused inward . . . but I’d ask all of you to get out and tell the story of the United States Army. . . . All of us have to pull together, a lot closer together, and deal with those family issues.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
AUSA Family Forum I,
AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition,
6 October 2003

The more we get the spouses and families involved, the healthier the Army becomes.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 152

Without [family] involvement, there is no commitment.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“Our Army—In Touch with America,”
ARMY, October 1995, p. 33

You can’t expect letters unless you write to somebody, too. . . . I want you to write me a letter. In your letter, remind me that we met here on this
date. And enclose this card. I’m doing this for three reasons. I want to see how long the mail takes. If you write to the Sergeant Major of the Army, then you’ll write to your family: your mother, your father, sister, brother. You’ll be in the “write” mood. Plus, I like to recognize great Soldiers.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,  
“Top Soldier Visits Troops in Mogadishu,”  
The Somalia Sand Paper,  
20 September 1993, pp. 1-2

Spouses become seasoned advocates of family readiness.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,  
“Our Army—In Touch with America,”  
ARMY, October 1995, p. 33

What I do worry about is the family members that are back in the rear here. We need to continue to educate and do everything we can to talk to our family members, to make sure they understand exactly what’s going on. . . . We need to continue to talk about things that are going on in this war. Counseling right now is one of the keys to success [to] talking not only to family members but to Soldiers.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,  
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference,  
AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition,  
6 October 2003

Taking care of the family is also a method of increasing and improving our readiness, morale and our ability to fight and win.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,  
“SMA Kidd Defines Roles,”  
Sentinel, 12 March 1993, p. 3

**Fitness**

[SMA Leon L.] Van Autreve, then 52, undertook parachute training to prepare himself for the mission [polar route aircraft rescue missions], or at least to better understand what the Soldier in his command had to endure.

—Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 94
Running the AUSA Army Ten-Miler . . . has become something that I do to check myself from year to year. . . . I draw a lot of strength when I run around other people.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
"Sgt. Maj. of Army Speaks on NCOs, Leadership, the Army Ten-Miler," *Pentagram*, 10 October 1991, p. 3

At the age of 41, [SMA Glen E. Morrell] earned recognition as the distinguished honor graduate of his Ranger class.

—GEN John A. Wickham, Jr.,
*Collected Works of the Thirtieth Chief of Staff*, *United States Army*, 1987, p. 258

I would like to emphasize how important physical fitness is. During combat, you have tremendous adrenaline flow. It helps during that time. [Also] if you are wounded, it helps you. According to the doctors, you can be operated on more often, the repair work can be accomplished quicker, you heal much faster, are more resilient and if you’re physically fit you have a better mental attitude. You can come back quicker.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
*Arctic Star*, November 24, 1993, p. 3

**Freedom**

It is almost uncanny how the three underlying principles of our founding fathers have remained unchanged over the years—our commitment to be independent, our will to win and our determination to fight to retain our inalienable rights. . . . We all need to understand our heritage as Soldiers in order that we may be better protectors of our nation’s sacred trust.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
"What Soldiering Is All About,"
*ARMY*, October 1986, pp. 40-41

I am among the many millions who have served in the military establishment of this great nation. I can think of no greater or more honorable contribution I could have made. I am not only proud of having been Sergeant Major of the Army,
I am proud to have been a Soldier. When you think of the freedom you enjoy in this country, think of the sacrifices the Soldier has made to keep us free.  

—SMA George W. Dunaway, Center of Military History Interview, 1990, p. 66

Our freedom to abide by an inner vision, our opportunity to meet some personal challenge—is entirely dependent upon our nation remaining free.  


For those who have fought for it, freedom has a taste the protected will never know.  

—An Australian, quoted by SMA Glen E. Morrell, "What Soldiering is All About," ARMY, October 1986, p. 42

We owe our nation, our children and grandchildren the debt of ensuring that each of our Soldiers knows what it is they are protecting and guarding and why. . . . Our children and grandchildren will flourish and remain as strong, dedicated and morally sound as we are today, providing the will is never lost for the cause of freedom.  

—SMA Glen E. Morrell, "What Soldiering Is All About," ARMY, October 1986, p. 42

Those extraordinary men who founded our nation . . . swore their fortunes, their sacred honor—their very lives—for the sake of an idea.  


Information and Keeping Soldiers Informed

All . . . Soldiers want are the facts and the truth. . . . Allow information to flow without filters.  

My goal, when I go out to visit with Soldiers, is to get a pulse check on how things are going and to leave them better informed.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston,
“Transforming Our Army—A Soldier’s Perspective,”
*ARMY*, October 2006, p. 29

The three “Bs” of good public speaking: I’ll be sincere, I’ll be brief, and I’ll be gone!

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
“’Shades of Green’ Recreation Center Serves Soldiers,” Speech File Service 3rd Quarter, Fiscal Year 1994, p. 18

Soldiers . . . serve in some 80 countries around the world with “quiet minds” because their leaders keep them and their families informed.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“Our Army—In Touch with America,”
*ARMY*, October 1995, p. 29

[The Public Affairs Office] can help you recognize Soldiers . . . Wherever I travel, I encourage the first sergeants and command sergeants major of installations and units to make better use of their [Public Affairs] personnel.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,

You should not be afraid to seek information and bounce ideas off different people to make sure you’re making a right decision.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Sergeant to Sergeant,” *Sergeants’ Business*, May-June 1987, p. 4

[Public Affairs personnel have] got to tell commanders how you fit in and what you can do for them. And then demonstrate those capabilities.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,

The American Soldier best performs his mission if he is well informed and knows the purpose of that mission.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,
“The NCO Must Grow with the Army,”
*ARMY*, October 1972, p. 25
Soldiers just want to know what’s going on and to know the truth. They want to know that they are appreciated and that their families will be taken care of.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 172

One of the biggest concerns I hear when traveling is young Soldiers being wrapped up in the monotony of day-to-day activities without getting an appreciation for how their efforts are affecting the big picture. You have to keep your Soldiers informed.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston,
"U.S. Soldiers—Ambassadors of Democracy,"
ARMY, October 2005, p. 38

Informed Soldiers make better career and lifetime decisions for themselves and their families.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, pp. 171-172

**Leader Development**

Mentoring helps Soldiers to establish realistic personal and professional goals, and also helps them stay focused.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
"Our Army—In Touch with America,"
ARMY, October 1995, p. 33

A pat on the back—applied at the proper moment in the circumstances—can have a dramatic influence in developing a leader.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,
"First, and Getting Firster,"
ARMY, October 1975, p. 24

The transformation that takes place when you say, “Jones, you are in charge,” is amazing.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
"Keep Up with Change in ’80s,"
ARMY, October 1982, p. 30

[1SG Felix Helms] was tough as nails, but he always looked out for my best interests. . . . He
was always trying to teach me something. I’d be on my way out the front door for the day and he’d call me in and say, “Come here, let me show you how to run a suspense file.” Or, maybe it was how to counsel or how to set up a duty roster. It doesn’t really matter. When you get down to it, it’s not about what skills he taught me, it’s the fact that he gave a damn about me.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“SMA McKinney Launches Each Day with NCO Creed,” The NCO Journal, Fall 1995, pp. 15-16

The three pillars of leader development: institutional training, unit expertise and self development.

1. The Noncommissioned Officer Education System that is now linked to promotions and our functional courses, such as the First Sergeant Course, serves as our institutional training.

2. The second pillar is our unit leader development. The most important place for a noncommissioned officer is in a unit—leading and training Soldiers and being developed by unit leaders based on the commander’s training plan.

3. The third pillar is individual study and self-improvement. This includes staying current on new battle doctrine and enrolling in self-development training and education.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
“From the Top,” Army Trainer, Fall 1989, p. 4

I’ve reminded many NCOs that they wouldn’t be where they are today if someone hadn’t given them a little extra time. I know I wouldn’t be where I am.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,

The most enduring legacy that we can leave for our future generations of noncommissioned officers will be leader development.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
“From the SMA,” NCO Call, May-June 1990, inside front cover
Soldiers learn to be good leaders from good leaders.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
“NCOs Make It Happen,”
ARMY, October 1994, p. 34

The way to be a good leader is to be a leader. From what I’ve seen, development comes with time.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
“Former SMA Still Serves,” Army News Service,
25 October 2007

One of the things that makes our Army great is we train and plan for all of our Soldiers to be leaders. When the time comes, whether at peace or at war, the American Soldier has and will rise to the occasion.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
“NCOs: Maintain the Momentum,”
Field Artillery, December 1987, p. 46

When NCOs stand in front of their Soldiers, they will see a reflection of themselves. Look into their eyes, and you’ll know how well you are leading.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“Our Army—In Touch with America,”
ARMY, October 1995, p. 33

**Leadership Development — Soldiers into NCOs**

Anybody who comes into the NCO Corps has to be recommended by an NCO, whether it be a squad leader, section leader, platoon sergeant or first sergeant. We’re the ones who really open the door for them . . . One good indicator as to whether [a Soldier] should become a future Army leader is whether you are willing to let that person lead one of your loved ones. That’s the kind of person we need.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Performance, Character and Contact,”
Soldiers, January 1984, p. 6

If you look at the active [Army], Guard and Reserve, there’s 3,000 companies out there . . . so you’ve got 3,000 companies out there that are
doing monthly NCO and Soldier of the Month competitions. There [are] 1,200 battalions out there that are doing competitions, if not every month, at least every quarter. . . . They promote self-development [and] self-study, and it gets our young Soldiers and our noncommissioned officers really getting into and reading and studying doctrine and becoming subject matter experts in their profession.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston, 
Press Conference for the NCO and Soldier of the Year, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, 
6 October 2008

Good NCOs are not just born—they are groomed and grown through a lot of hard work and strong leadership by senior NCOs.

—SMA William A. Connelly, 
“Keep Up with Change in ’80s,” 
ARMY, October 1982, p. 29

Identifying good Soldiers—potential leaders—and turning them into good noncommissioned officers is a complex process. The bottom line is simple, however: weed out the poor performers, teach the right Soldiers the right things and recommend the best Soldiers for promotion and retention.

The only way to prepare good Soldiers to become noncommissioned officers is to place them in leadership positions and increase their responsibility according to their ability. This process takes time and patience. . . . Noncommissioned officers make noncommissioned officers!

—SMA Glen E. Morrell, 
“NCOs Are the ‘Vital Link in the Chain of Command.’” ARMY, October 1985, p. 64

[Platoon Sergeant Franco sat down with me when I was promoted to sergeant] and explained that I was no longer one of the boys. He said my job was to train my Soldiers so they could do whatever our leaders asked us to do and to make sure that none of them got hurt doing it.

—SMA Julius W. Gates, 
“Noncom Know How,” 
Soldiers, August 1987, p. 21
We have to identify [those we want to retain] early, take them under our wings and develop them, teach them what they need to know and send them to the noncommissioned officer education schools. If we do this in a timely manner, they will be much better leaders. At the same time, they will make the unit stronger. Ultimately, this will make the U.S. Army stronger.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Soldiers Deserve the Best Leaders,” Soldiers, December 1985, p. 6

To march proudly through the 21st century . . . requires quality Soldiers and outstanding leaders. It requires tough and realistic training that breeds flexible, capable leaders to fight and win our nation’s wars. Tough and challenging assignments prepare Soldiers and leaders for increasing responsibility.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,

When you pin that first stripe on, you’re going to have to make a mental adjustment. You’re going to have to weigh being a good friend on the one hand with being a good leader and dispatching your duties and responsibilities on the other. When you do, I think your peers must understand, “He was selected to be a leader.” I think most of them do.

Sometimes you’re tested by your peers. That’s where you have to let everybody know: “Look, I was selected and I’m going to be the best possible leader that I can be. If I have to get on you now and then, that’s the way it’s going to have to be. I’m going to make you be good Soldiers. At the same time, I’m going to develop you and give you a chance to be leaders, too.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Soldiers Deserve the Best Leaders,” Soldiers, December 1985, p. 8

If [a Soldier] is in the primary zone [for promotion] and you are not recommending them for promotion, they have to be counseled. . . . We’re not looking them in the eye and saying,
“Listen, I am not recommending you for sergeant and here’s the reason why. When you overcome these things, then we’re going to promote you.” . . . I don’t want you to put everybody before the promotion board. . . . If they’re ready and have the potential to be a sergeant, let’s get them before the board. If they’re not, then let’s tell them why not.

—SMA Robert E. Hall,
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 1999

The five steps in the making of an NCO: selection, coaching, give responsibility and authority, observe and critique but allow for error and re-coach.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“What Soldiering Is All About,” ARMY, October 1986, p. 41

Leadership

It is the leaders from corporal to general who are the responsible ones for maintaining a climate of opportunity, growth and caring which allows both cohesion and initiative to flourish.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“What Soldiering Is All About,” ARMY, October 1986, p. 42

Whichever way you push me, that’s the way I’m going. . . . If you see me as a lazy old bum, I’ll stay that way; but if you see me as a mature, intelligent person who can go out and make a lot of things happen, then for the most part I’m not going to go out and disappoint you.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“SMA McKinney Launches Each Day with NCO Creed,” The NCO Journal, Fall 1995, p. 16

Leadership doesn’t just happen. Leadership is an art. . . . The exercise of leadership . . . connotes dedication, vigor and endurance—three qualities so essential in a military leader.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,
You must . . . love being a Soldier; love being around other Soldiers; love leading, training and caring for Soldiers and their families; be technically and tactically proficient; be dedicated, motivated, physically fit, mentally alert and morally straight; believe in your fellow Soldier, in your Army and in your nation; strive to be all you can be. And, if you’re a leader, want the same for those in your charge.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
“Being a Soldier,” Soldiers, May 1994, inside back cover

See and be seen. Talk to Soldiers on their turf, and see to their moral and ethical development. Use NCO and officer professional development opportunities. . . . Walk the walk, and set the example around the clock every day of the week.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,

The reason you find good units or some bad units [depends on] leadership, getting people qualified and resources.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 139

We need to examine ourselves from time to time: to see if we measure up as good leaders. . . . Pull out that worn copy of FM 22-100 [Leadership] and read it again. You may find it a whole lot more interesting this time.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,
“Winding Down of War Calls for Top Leaders,” ARMY, October 1971, p. 27

Of the four interrelated qualities vital to a modern Army—Professionalism, Unity, Leadership, Loyalty—the key quality is leadership.

—SMA George W. Dunaway,
“Let’s PULL Together,” Army Digest, June 1969, p. 27

I believe every good Soldier wants to live in an organized environment, secure in the knowledge
that he or she will not be threatened or harassed by others, confident that his or her efforts will be recognized, and aware that the nonproductive Soldier will be invited to leave. In such an environment, Soldiers will be proud of their units and will demonstrate that pride with their performance and behavior.

—SMA William A. Connelly, 
“The Soldier Remains Our Ultimate Weapon,”  
ARMY, October 1979, p. 24

A special bond develops when leaders live their lives following the fundamentals of leadership.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,  
“Hard Work, Leadership Still Keys to Quality,”  
ARMY, October 1984, p. 53

Over the years we have seen many changes in our Army—vehicles, weapon systems, uniforms and organizations. . . . However, one thing has not changed—the responsibility entrusted to U.S. Army noncommissioned officers to lead, train, take care and serve as role models for our Soldiers.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,  
“Sergeant to Sergeant,” Sergeants’ Business,  
March-April 1989, p. 2

Concentrate on doing the very best you can with your resources.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,  
“Kidd Challenges Post’s New NCOs,”  
Mountaineer, 4 November 1994, p. 1

A good leader is like a good athlete. He must, first of all, have a love for the game. Then he must learn the fundamentals, practice them until he gains a degree of excellence and, finally, continue to strive for higher proficiency for as long as he remains active in the sport.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,  
“Winding Down of War Calls for Top Leaders,”  
ARMY, October 1971, p. 27

No matter what the leader’s rank or organizational level, each leader has the same obligation. That obligation is to inspire and develop excellence in individuals and organizations; train
members toward professional competency; instill members with the spirit to win; see to their needs and well-being; and set standards that will be emulated by those they lead. The bond between the leader, the led and the organization must produce leaders who are grounded in the fundamentals, yet responsive to new ideas. We call on all of you to make the theme of leadership a reality in the total Army.

—Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh, Jr., quoted by SMA Glen E. Morrell, on the 1985 Army Theme of Leadership, “NCOs Are the ‘Vital Link in the Chain of Command.’” ARMY, October 1985, pp. 63-64

[Leaders] have to be everything they want their Soldiers to be.


The greatest privilege is the honor of leading America’s finest men and women both in war and peace.


We must capitalize on everyone’s capabilities.


The main purpose of being a leader is to be someone who cares enough to bring the group together to accomplish a mission successfully, to allow people to grow, to allow people to be safe and to allow them to be able to take care of their families.


In a service in which high technology and increasingly sophisticated new equipment are being viewed as the keys to maintaining a modern fighting force, individual Soldiers remain the most
important asset in achieving battlefield success—but they still are only as good as their leadership.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“The NCO: More Vital Than Ever to Readiness,”
ARMY, October 1983, p. 27

Squad leaders, platoon sergeants and first sergeants . . . create the leadership environment in which today’s Army concepts thrive or expire.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
in Fisher, Guardians of the Republic, 1994, p. 353

“Leadership by example” is much more than a cliché; it is a way of life.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“The NCO: More Vital Than Ever to Readiness,”
ARMY, October 1983, p. 28

Our Soldiers have simple requests. They don’t expect to get rich soldiering. They only ask that their leaders train them hard, are honest and fair and truly care for their welfare.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
“SMA Tilley’s Farewell Remarks,”
15 January 2004

If you treat a person the way you see them, they’ll stay that way; but if you treat that person the way you want them to be, then chances are they’ll change.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“SMA McKinney Launches Each Day with NCO Creed,” The NCO Journal, Fall 1995, p. 16

Our Soldiers are no better than those who give guidance.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
“Pride in Profession: The NCO’s Hallmark,”
ARMY, October 1973, p. 21

Noncommissioned officer leaders must know themselves, their subjects, their Soldiers and their Soldier’s needs. Furthermore, they must be capable of inspiring young leaders with their knowledge. That cannot be done by words alone; it must be done by personal examples of ethical and professional excellence.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“NCOs Are the ‘Vital Link in the Chain of Command.’” ARMY, October 1985, p. 65
Leaders need look no further than their own Soldiers for a measure of what kind of leader they are.


There is no secret to good leadership and good units. Our profession is a way of life. We must set the standard of excellence, meet that standard and help all Soldiers to meet it.


[One commander] taught me how to win and have your Soldiers with you at the finish line, and the other taught me how to . . . motivate Soldiers and maintain their respect and confidence.


You could fill bookcases with everyone’s interpretation over the last 10 to 15 years of the term, “Sergeant’s Business.” It is really simple. It is leader’s business . . . . When you get right down to it, everything Soldiers do—on duty or off—is NCO business.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell, “As the SMA Sees It,” Army Trainer, Fall 1984, p. 21

Learning and Knowledge

An educated force is a strong force.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell, “As the SMA Sees It,” Army Trainer, Fall 1984, p. 24

Remember the lessons that my generation learned the hard way on the battlefields of World War II. Although we may be leaving active duty, our experience remains in the military textbooks and in the military histories. Take advantage of it.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge, “Bainbridge Hailed as NCO Leader,” Army Times, 2 July 1979, p. 16
Senior NCOs must listen more to their men, to their ideas, their hopes and fears. These veteran leaders must not let this vast source of education and know-how go untapped.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,
“The SMA Talks to the Troops Man to Man,”
Soldiers, December 1971, p. 4

We can all learn from each other.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
“Sergeant Major of the Army Kidd Visits Warrior Division,” The Indianhead, 26 November 1993, p. 11

Do you have a better way? Tell me about it. I am not too old to learn.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“The NCO: More Vital Than Ever To Readiness,”
ARMY, October 1983, p. 30

Although [SMA Leon L.] Van Autreve learned a great deal from official Department of Defense and Department of the Army briefings, he learned more by talking directly to action officers and noncommissioned officers who dealt with daily issues. Not as concerned about making an impression, they were more candid; in that informal situation, they often passed on more detailed information, often not included in their briefings to the Chief of Staff. In addition, at this lower level, they dealt with problems and issues impacting more on the Soldier, while the Chief of Staff himself tended to focus on those which affected the entire Army.

—Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 96

Civilian education certainly enhances the individual’s personal and professional value and especially the NCOs. Again, we aren’t talking about an entry on a service record. We’re talking about an individual acquiring more tools which will assist in daily living and certainly in the performance of military duties.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
“Walking Tall—and Eager,”
Soldiers, February 1974, p. 33
Don’t forget about your retirees and your veterans. They’ll continue to do so many things for you, all you need to do is ask them. In some cases we let a noncommissioned officer retire and never continue to use them. I’d ask you to continue to [talk to them].

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,  
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference,  
AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, 6 October 2003

Put our knowledge and training to use in guiding and assisting the men who will some day replace us.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,  
“Contact Point with the Top for the Soldier in the Field,” ARMY, October 1967, p. 70

Fundamental to all that we do in life, the search for knowledge must not end with a high school diploma. . . . High performance Soldiers feel the need and motivation for self growth.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,  
“Reaching for Excellence,” Sergeants’ Business,  
November-December 1986, p. 5

Not a single one of us can afford to limp through our military life on the crutch of limited education.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,  
“Walking Tall—and Eager,”  
Soldiers, February 1974, p. 33

Knowledge helps you overcome the fear of the unknown. Knowing your stuff helps give you the confidence you need to meet the enemy in battle.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,  
“Headed for Combat,”  
Army Digest, January 1968, p. 10

Education is important—I want you to get an education for the future—but the main thing you need to learn is your job because there’s no second best. No second best in our job. If you don’t know your job you can’t learn it when you go to war, and we are at war.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,  
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 2002
Learning from Mistakes

Schools and their training offer better ways to do things, but only through experience are we able to capitalize on this learning. The process of profiting from mistakes becomes a milestone in learning to become a more efficient Soldier.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge, “Quality, Training and Motivation,” ARMY, October 1976, p. 28

We have a lot of young, smart NCOs who want to make a difference, who want their share of responsibility, who are willing to learn from their mistakes.


[Making a mistake as the new SMA] was certainly a concern during the first couple of days but I became so busy I just didn’t have time to think about it.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve, “As I See It,” Soldiers, July 1975, p. 6

Why should everyone have to make the same mistakes?


Some of us learned our profession the hard way, without benefit of schooling and with little shared knowledge. While this is a sure way of learning—by making a lot of mistakes—it is also expensive and inefficient.


Soldiers will make mistakes, but as long as they are honest mistakes, the penalty should not be too great. Errors of omission, as in not knowing how to do something, should receive enough notice to make corrections. But errors of commission, such
as knowing what is right but doing differently, should result in immediate punishment.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
"Meeting Leadership Challenges as a Team,"

**Listening**

Soldiers can solve 98 percent of their problems by just talking to someone about them. All you have to do is listen.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,
Top Sergeant, 1995, p. 346

When we provide positive leadership, it allows for “active listening.”

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
"Meeting Leadership Challenges as a Team,"

What NCOs and officers alike have to learn is how to listen to problems. You may have heard that problem many times before and half the time the Soldier just wants to get it off his chest, but you have to listen. People will be surprised how many problems they can resolve just by being interested enough to listen.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
"Chain of Command: It Links Private to President," Soldiers, October 1979, p. 10

It is not always necessary that the subordinate’s position be adopted. What is important to him is that he has been allowed to express his view and to participate.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,
"The NCO Must Grow with the Army,"
ARMY, October 1972, p. 25

It would behoove you [major field commanders] to pay attention to what [the SMA] has to say.

—GEN William C. Westmoreland,
quoted by SMA Silas L. Copeland,
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 77

As I travel around our Army, the one thing many NCOs and Soldiers tell me is this: “When you
talk with our leaders or commanders, ask them to listen to us. We know what we’re doing. We have the experience and all we want to do is be part of the plan and then show them what we know. They won’t be disappointed.”

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,  
“Meeting Leadership Challenges as a Team,”  

I want to temper my own judgment with the best thinking I can get from other noncommissioned officers.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,  
“First Look at a New Job,”  
ARMY, October 1966, p. 84

There is usually some validity in everything the Soldier has to say.

—SMA William A. Connelly,  
“Chain of Command: It Links Private to President,”  
Soldiers, October 1979, p. 10

When we truly listen to our Soldiers and NCOs, we find better ways to do things. But more important, it helps leaders understand that there is a division of labor and how that division of labor should and can be used effectively.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,  
“Meeting Leadership Challenges as a Team,”  

I didn’t know [SMA Glen E. Morrell] before I selected him. But I’ve listened to him and I pay attention to what he has to say.

—GEN John A. Wickham, Jr.,  
Collected Works of the Thirtieth Chief of Staff,  
United States Army, 1987, p. 335

Noncommissioned Officers

The goal of the corps of NCOs, whose duty is the day-to-day business of running the Army so the officer corps has time to command it, is to continue to improve our Army at every turn. We want to leave it better than we found it.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,  
“Quality, Training and Motivation,”  
ARMY, October 1976, p. 29
The Army has about 330,000 people forward deployed in about 120 different locations. That just means that we’re stretched kind of thin, [but] we’re doing the right kind of things. It’s going to call for . . . every noncommissioned officer to step up to the plate, to be responsible. There’s no room for slack right now, for anybody. . . . These are going to be tough times for all of us in the United States Army . . . so you have to stay focused . . . focus on the basic fundamentals of being a Soldier, the kind of things that will keep you alive on the battlefield.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference,
AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition,
6 October 2003

Good NCOs are never satisfied with the status quo.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
“As I See It,” Soldiers, July 1975, p. 6

It is difficult to be a good noncommissioned officer. If it had been easy, they would have given it to the officer corps.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
in many addresses to Soldiers, telephone conversation with M. M. Yamamoto, 28 May 1996

[SMA William A. Connelly considered his assignment to the National Guard] rewarding because he worked with dedicated NCOs who had a “lifetime invested in their unit.”

—Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 118

Although the Department of the Army is always formulating new programs and experimenting with these schemes, it takes the full support and whole-hearted dedication of all enlisted ranks to make sure that the future’s threats to our way of life can be overcome.

—SMA George W. Dunaway,
“‘People Benefits’ Will Get More Emphasis in ‘70s,” ARMY, October 1970, p. 35

The corps is only as good as the core.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Hard Work, Leadership Still Keys to Quality,”
ARMY, October 1984, p. 53
Trust, confidence and support given to us by our chain of command, and the tenacity of the great noncommissioned officers of the past, have laid the foundation and developed our quality corporals and sergeants.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
"From the Top," Army Trainer, Fall 1989, p. 2

NCOs are so important [because] they are the recruiters, the first trainers, the first-line leaders, and the NCOs are the ones responsible for the equipment and the training of the Soldiers on that equipment.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
"Kidd Visits Post, Talks to Soldiers,”
Huachuca Scout, 8 December 1994, p. 3A

The noncommissioned officers who meet . . . professional challenges successfully will be the shakers and the movers, the leaders and the doers, the hard chargers and the thorough supervisors.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
“The NCO at the Apex,”
ARMY, October 1974, p. 18

We have to, as a noncommissioned officer corps, focus more on the basic fundamentals of being a Soldier. . . . The basic fundamentals are the things that made us so good in the military.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 2000

The good NCO has never been short in confidence, either to perform the mission or to inform the superior that he or she was interfering with traditional NCO business.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,
“We Have Met the Challenge,”
ARMY, October 1978, p. 27

Experience, especially staff experience, is vital to the command sergeant major (CSM). A Soldier whose highest level of experience has been that of the first sergeant—no matter how good a first sergeant he may have been—is going to require a period of adjustment when he finds himself the commander’s chief enlisted representative on the
battalion staff. During the interim, while the new battalion CSM learns to shake the adversary role he played as a hard-charging first sergeant and learns how to work with the staff, Soldiers suffer.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,  
“News Call,” ARMY, May 1984, p. 75

From the beginning of our Army, the best Soldiers have been selected from the ranks to wear the chevrons of the noncommissioned officer. . . . The trust, confidence and authority to lead, train, instill discipline, care for and serve as role models and mentors for Soldiers come with the insignia of rank, training and experience.

—SMA Robert E. Hall,  
“The Noncommissioned Officer Corps: Meeting the Army’s Challenges,” ARMY, October 1999, p. 34

NCOs are in the best position to identify and implement . . . improvements at the Soldier level.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,  
“From the SMA,” NCO Call, September-October 1991, inside front cover

Soldiers who wear NCO’s chevrons on their sleeves represent a unique Army strength.

—Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh, Jr., GEN Carl E. Vuono and SMA Julius W. Gates,  

Noncommissioned officers [are] the heart and soul of our force. They are the heart because they determine our pulse. . . . They are the Army’s soul because they represent and demand the Soldierly virtues of dedication, and discipline, and the sense of responsibility.

—GEN Carl E. Vuono,  
address at the SMA swearing-in ceremony, Collected Works of the Thirty-first Chief of Staff, United States Army, 1991, p. 8

It is the noncommissioned officer to whom the Soldier first turns when he needs information, counsel or other help.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,  
“The NCO at the Apex,” ARMY, October 1974, p. 18
The care and cleaning of lieutenants is NCO business.


Noncommissioned officers are the primary component in ensuring that Soldiers’ needs are provided for professionally and personally. Since the first citizen-Soldier took his oath and put on the chevrons of an Army noncommissioned officer, it has meant more than just extra money at the paymaster’s table; it is the honor and responsibility those chevrons represent. They carry the responsibility of training our Soldiers to fight and win our nation’s wars. There is no other profession that demands so much from an individual, nor is there one profession that carries such a load on its shoulders. Our country has taken notice of our sacrifices and achievements, and we must not slack off now.


Soldiers . . . need their sergeants to get down in the dirt and dig the foxhole or to crawl up under a vehicle and get greasy. . . . I have yet to have a Soldier for whom I have done this fail me — no matter how many butt chewings that Soldier may have gotten.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney, "Professionalism: Key to a Good Leader;" Korus, April 1996, p. 14

Regardless of the kind of unit you’re in, it ought to be an “elite” outfit, because its NCOs can make it one.


NCOs and Soldiers will be invaluable in enhancing the Army of the future. The opportunity for them is to test concepts, to buy things right off the shelf, to test them and to try to get them into the force quickly to improve our capabilities.
Feedback from the Soldiers helped us truly evaluate a piece of equipment, get changes made rapidly and get that into the system quickly. The key for the noncommissioned officers will be to watch over their Soldiers, allow them to use [new technologies] and really capture the feedback.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
"Kidd’s Post Ties Run Deep,”
Fort Hood Sentinel, 4 May 1995, p. A12

The quality of the noncommissioned officer corps determines in large measure the quality of the Army.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 25

NCOs [need] to get involved in activities within their own area of control and influence. They need to be concerned with the people on their left and right flanks, but . . . to be more concerned with those people and things in their own lane.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
"Professionalism: Key to a Good Leader,”
Korus, April 1996, p. 14

Some of our new equipment is that much more advanced over what we used before. Most of us expect the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) schools or new equipment training teams to train new Soldiers and their leaders in maintenance and the use of equipment—and they do—but this is an enormous mission and without the NCO Corps’s involvement, it will not be completed.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
"The NCO: More Vital Than Ever to Readiness,”
ARMY, October 1983, p. 29

NCOs are the key to keeping the chain of command functioning and credible.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
"Chain of Command: It Links Private to President,” Soldiers, October 1979, p. 10

The title of sergeant major evokes many images: the steady, courageous leader whose very presence calms and settles his men on the eve of battle;
the articulate, demanding senior NCO of the battalion who accepts only the highest standards of appearance, performance and training; the experienced senior leader who always seems to have the answer or knows where to get it; and the ever-present embodiment of higher level commanders whose ability to communicate directly with line troops is so often taken for granted.

—Gillespie et al., *The Sergeants Major of the Army*, 1995, p. 4

Squad leaders, platoon sergeants and first sergeants can make or break any Army program.


Young Soldiers look at their first and second line bosses as “higher headquarters.” The NCO is Department of the Army to them.


While our national leadership evaluates key Soldier issues in the years ahead, we all recognize that resources do not exist to address every challenge. Our noncommissioned leaders must bridge that gap as they always have. We have to enforce standards, make the chain of command work and take care of Soldiers.


[I think of the whole process of “people” programs] as a kind of inverted pyramid. At the top is the broad base of policy. Many high-level staffs and agencies help establish these policies, each of which carries considerable weight. Beneath the policies in the inverted pyramid are the implementing policies and instructions. There are numerous sources and channels for these, each of which adds to the weight and increases the pressure. Finally, at the bottom, is the apex of the inverted pyramid, the unit: the company or battery, and the platoons, squads and sections that
make up the Army. The entire pyramid’s weight is concentrated here. This is the focal point where the noncommissioned officer can play a major role.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
“The NCO at the Apex,”
ARMY, October 1974, p. 17

The victory in Operation Desert Storm must be remembered above all as a monument to the Army’s corps of noncommissioned officers—the squad leaders, tank commanders, section chiefs, platoon sergeants, first sergeants and command sergeants major in combat, combat support and combat service support units—men and women who won the battle where it counted: up close and personal.

—GEN Carl E. Vuono,
address at the retirement review in honor of SMA Julius W. Gates, Collected Works of the Thirty-first Chief of Staff, United States Army, 1991, p. 381

We get paid to lead from the front. We get paid to be professional noncommissioned officers. We’ve got to get out and talk to Soldiers . . . and that’s what they want from us. Most Soldiers stay in the Army . . . because of their leadership, because of the noncommissioned officer leadership. They’re looking for somebody to talk to them about being an NCO.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 2000

The drill instructor’s job is a vitally important one. The drill instructor makes the first significant contact with the volunteer and is also responsible for the young Soldier’s initial military training. We want the best people training our young Soldiers.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
“As I See It,” Soldiers, July 1975, p. 8

There’s about three questions that Soldiers ask me, but they look to [NCOs] for the answers. They want to know if those higher than they are in the chain of command care about them. Are you focused up the chain of command, or are you
focused down toward the Soldiers? There’s a lot of Soldiers out there that are asking that question, and all they want is some reassurance that you care about them. The second thing they want to know is, can they trust you? How do you get Soldiers to trust you? Do what’s right, every day, legally and morally. Create an environment where Soldiers can be all they can be and do the right things in the right ways. The other thing they want to know is that they belong to a winning organization. They just want a commitment of excellence from you.

—SMA Robert E. Hall,
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 1998

The NCO Creed

All the answers are in [the NCO Creed]. It talks about how professional we should be, it talks about us being the backbone of the Army, it talks about NCO-officer relationships, it talks about integrity. It’s an affirmation of how we do business.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“SMA McKinney Launches Each Day with NCO Creed,” The NCO Journal, Fall 1995, p. 14

My charge to you is to continue to uphold those traditions, those two basic responsibilities of the noncommissioned officer that stem from the NCO Creed: To accomplish the mission and the welfare of Soldiers.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston,
speaking at Fort Leavenworth, KS, 17 March 2009

The NCO Creed . . . is my rock and should be the foundation on which all NCOs build their two ideals—leadership and professionalism.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“Our Army—In Touch with America,” ARMY, October 1995, p. 33

An easy way to stay focused . . . is to think about the NCO Creed every day.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“New SMA: View from the Top,” Soldiers, October 1995, p. 29
When the new Sergeant Major of the Army rises each morning he goes to the mirror, looks at himself and repeats what are perhaps the most vital 287 words of his day.

—The NCO Journal, regarding SMA Gene C. McKinney and the NCO Creed, Fall 1995, front cover

Meeting the objective of placing positive leadership on our windshield and the zero defects mentality in our rearview mirror is easy to do if we look to the NCO Creed.


At the end of a mission, MSG Pryor came running up [to his commander], wanting to know if everyone was okay. The man was bleeding and broken, and all he wanted to know was if his Soldiers were okay. Asked what his thoughts were about the engagement, MSG Pryor said “I just did what I had to do.”

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston, accepting the George C. Marshall Medal on behalf of the American Soldier, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, 27 October 2004

[The NCO Creed] should be every NCO’s primary icon when he or she “boots-up” each day and his or her affirmation “help screen” to guide daily endeavors.


There’s great strength in statements like, “No one is more professional than I am.”


“When freedom calls, we were there.” There’s no question about that. . . . I think of things [like that], and they mean much more to me. I think of those things all the time and I think of how proud I am of being a Soldier. . . . I’m a tanker. I love being a tanker, I love being an infantryman—but I love
being a Soldier. That’s my life. That’s what I live for, and that’s what you live for.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
Sergeant Major of the Army Luncheon,
AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition,
October 2002

The NCO Creed is filled with many words of wisdom and guidance that capture the essence of what it means to be a Soldier, an NCO, in America’s Army.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“Our Army—In Touch with America,”
ARMY, October 1995, p. 33

Noncommissioned Officer Education System

All that attendance [at NCOES] does is enhance the intellectual capabilities of the NCO. The individual NCO must then apply the information made available.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
“NCOES Sets the Pace for Enlisted Leadership,”
The NCO Journal, Fall 1992, p. 10

NCOES is the catalyst for the magnificent training NCOs are receiving today.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,
“NCOES Sets the Pace for Enlisted Leadership,”
The NCO Journal, Fall 1992, p. 10

The noncommissioned officers’ education system (NCOES) does not produce noncommissioned officers. It will not nor was it ever intended to do so. The NCOES builds upon the training conducted by the unit to further the development of that noncommissioned officer. Leaders are made, not born.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“NCOs Are the ‘Vital Link in the Chain of Command.’” ARMY, October 1985, p. 64

We’re sold on NCOES. It’s the only way to fly and we like the flight plan a little better each time we attend an NCOES graduation.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
“Walking Tall—and Eager,”
Soldiers, February 1974, p. 31
[NCOES] provided the foundation for building an Army that is second to none and a quality NCO Corps that is admired and respected by countries throughout the world.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
"NCO Call," Harrison Post, 17 November 1994, p. 2

[In NCOES] we work on a Soldier’s potential, better equip him to understand himself, his abilities and his role on the Army team. The NCOES provides a means of ensuring the quality NCO’s continued contribution to a constantly modernizing Army.

These training systems are more than merely some more schools; they are true educational institutions. The entire system available to the enlisted force continues to improve and is the prime catalyst in producing a more professional force.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,
"Quality, Training and Motivation," ARMY, October 1976, p. 28

There can be no question that [the Sergeants Major Academy] is one of the best things that ever happened to the NCO Corps.

—SMA George W. Dunaway,
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 165

Our Army has invested heavily into building a strong noncommissioned officer corps. . . . Our Army has made a wise investment.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
"From the SMA," NCO Call, May-June 1990, inside front cover

I sincerely believe both the Army and the officer corps have been enhanced 1,000 percent by NCOES.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
"NCOES Sets the Pace for Enlisted Leadership," The NCO Journal, Fall 1992, p. 10

It’s not evident to the whole Army, but my contribution was to the NCOES. . . . In my visits to the field, I found out that there was money
being used by commanders—that should be used for educational purposes—that was going into field exercises. . . . I got an audience with General [Maxwell R.] Thurman and I spent about two hours with him. . . . When the conversation was all finished, he said, “Sergeant Major . . . NCOES is not going to go away because of money.” That two hours, out of my whole four-year tour, I think was worth it to the Army, and to the NCO Corps.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,
“The Office of SMA—From Then to Now,”
The NCO Journal, Summer 1994, p. 11

[NCOES teaches NCOs] how to be better NCOs. It teaches them things that can’t be taught in a unit. The curriculum and association with fellow NCOs prepares a young sergeant for leadership. Any time we give NCOs more knowledge, we make them, their unit and the Army better.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Performance, Character and Contact,”
Soldiers, January 1984, pp. 6-7

Our people come out of [NCOES] courses walking tall and eager to take on the world.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
“Walking Tall—and Eager,”
Soldiers, February 1974, p. 31

In 1966, Chief of Staff GEN Harold K. Johnson convened the first major command command sergeants major conference at the Pentagon. . . . The number one recommendation was establishment of an NCOES.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,
“But You’re a Combat Veteran: You Know Everything,”
The NCO Journal, Fall 1992, p. 15

It is the noncommissioned officers’ education system that enhances the leadership potential and professionalism of our NCO corps. The challenge of every NCO is to translate personal achievement into the Army’s success.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
“The American GI—Person of the Century: ‘Our Heritage and Legacy,’”
ARMY, October 2000, p. 38
The “war college” for NCOs: the Sergeants Major Academy.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve, “The NCO at the Apex,” ARMY, October 1974, p. 18

Because the Soldier can see a career pattern develop [in NCOES training], is another reason why he becomes motivated.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge, “Quality, Training and Motivation,” ARMY, October 1976, p. 28

The Past, Present and Future

We hold the future of the NCO Corps in our hands.


Our challenge today is to look forward, to write our own history.


History lessons are valued treasures that must be used and guarded.


We each leave our mark in one way or another.


[Soldiers spend] too much time and energy . . . on thinking about things they can’t affect, then they slight themselves, and sometimes other Soldiers and the mission, in the things they can affect. . . . Don’t be concerned about what happened yesterday. I’m not saying forget your past, what I am saying is be more concerned about what’s going on right in front of you, now.

The noncommissioned officer who does not read and impart his knowledge of military history is shortchanging our Soldiers, our leadership, our Army.


Problem-solving

We do still have some problems here but it only means we have to work a little harder.


[The solutions to] a lot of Soldiers’ problems are really a matter of just talking to them.


Citizens everywhere, and especially Soldiers, should remember that entrenched bureaucracy, whatever the level, can be overcome.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge, Top Sergeant, 1995, p. 191

Sometimes the Soldier just thinks he’s got a problem. Well, if the Soldier thinks he has a problem, then he really has a problem.

—SMA William A. Connelly, “Chain of Command: It Links Private to President,” Soldiers, October 1979, p. 10

When people talk together, most of what appears to be problems have a way of shrinking to manageable size or of vanishing altogether.


Seek to be part of the solution, not the problem.

Our object is to go out there and attempt to cure the problem; take care of it.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
“The Office of SMA—From Then to Now,”
The NCO Journal, Summer 1994, p. 11

You find that one of your men has a problem. This means you have a problem, too. What to do? It depends on the situation. It depends on the man, his age and experience, and his actual problem. Your main function is not to solve the problem for him, but to establish a climate of understanding in which the man feels free to seek intelligent help.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,
“Understanding Soldier Problems,”
Army Digest, April 1967, p. 5

We would be much better served if we could do a better job of accentuating the positive. Pat that young NCO on the back when he does it right. Better yet, have the guts to underwrite NCO mistakes and back up our junior NCOs. Finally, look for solutions and suggest them instead of problems to our commanders.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
“NCOs: It’s Time to Get Tough,”
ARMY, October 1981, p. 30

Ninety-five percent of the problems I encountered in the field I should be able to take care of by going to action officers.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 95

Promotion

You have to take the tough jobs [and] assignments so you can show what you can do.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
“Training Tops Army Agenda,”
Casemate, 24 September 1993, p. 1

Hard questions must be answered [on promotion boards]. What has this NCO done during his career? What has he failed to do? What makes him better (or worse) than the hundreds of other Soldiers against whom he is competing? Did
he look for the tough jobs or did he seek the line of least resistance? Does he take care of his subordinates yet demand that they produce to the best of their ability? What has he done personally to become a better Soldier? The answers to these questions do not come easily. . . . Not everyone can be selected. Some really fine Soldiers were not promoted because others were better qualified. The differences between the NCOs who were selected and those who were not are frequently very small.


If you . . . do your job to the best of your ability, the rest seems to take care of itself. In all honesty, I’ve never worried about a promotion or an efficiency report. I’ve always gotten reports that were accurate, and I’ve always gotten promoted fairly. I can’t say that I was always pleased with those reports, but looking back on them now, they were fair. That’s how hard it is to be a good NCO.

—SMA Julius W. Gates, “Noncom Know How,” Soldiers, August 1987, p. 21

A question frequently asked is, “What can I do to improve my chances of promotion?” The reply is really quite simple. . . . A Soldier must seek the responsible jobs and see to it that his job performance will earn him the desired efficiency report; and he must strive to improve his score on his MOS evaluation test.


The same thing that it takes to be a good Soldier will bring promotion.


Promotions are based on the whole person concept. A Soldier’s ability to compete for promotion was never in the past, isn’t today, nor will it ever be based [solely] on a written report.
Certainly, the evaluation report plays a critical role, but there are many other areas considered by the promotion board members. Skill Qualification Test (SQT) scores, appearance of the Soldier—based on the Department of the Army (DA) photo—experience, variety of assignments, difficult leader assignments, the disciplinary record, awards and decorations, physical fitness, NCOES attendance, academic reports, are all areas other than the evaluation report the promotion board considers to determine promotion eligibility.

—SMA Julius W. Gates, "NCOs: Maintain the Momentum," Field Artillery, December 1987, p. 47

If you qualify to be an officer, a warrant officer, and you want to advance yourself in the military, don’t stop. Keep moving. Because you have to do what’s right for yourself and your family. . . . You have to . . . take the path that’s right for you.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley, Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 2002

The most important thing Soldiers can do to enhance their careers is job performance.


**Quality of Life**

Effective quality-of-life changes can only happen when Soldiers and families inform the chain of command about what things work best and when they work best.


Quality of life . . . for most of us [is] peace of mind [and] a feeling that we are growing as people and as Soldiers.

Quality of life can . . . multiply combat effectiveness. . . . Enhancing the quality of life for the Soldier—our ultimate weapon—and his family, allows him to focus his attention on training and combat readiness.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,  
"From the SMA," Command Information Package,  
Spring 1993, p. 2

**Recruiting and Retention**

Confidence and satisfaction developed through meaningful training will cause Soldiers to reenlist. It will cause Soldiers who return to hometown USA to become our most effective recruiters by using positive word-of-mouth influence.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,  
"From the Top," Army Trainer, Fall 1989, p. 4

Adventure, challenge, being part of a team and facing and overcoming obstacles are all part of why young men and women join and Soldiers stay in the Army.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,  
"Soldiering When Less Is More,"  
**ARMY**, October 1993, p. 29

The bar to reenlistment signals the fourth quarter in a contest where there is no overtime for a lucky play in a sudden-death play-off. The final score is for keeps. It is a blunt warning that professionalism is the norm and not the exception.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,  
"First, and Getting Firster,"  
**ARMY**, October 1975, p. 24

The best recruiting tool we have is a reserve Soldier who feels he or she is making a meaningful contribution; being trained well to do the job and who relates that satisfaction to friends at work and in the community.

—SMA William A. Connelly,  
"The Soldier Remains Our Ultimate Weapon,"  
**ARMY**, October 1979, p. 24

Quality attracts quality.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,  
"From the Top," Army Trainer, Fall 1989, p. 4
Good people recruit good people.

—GEN Howard G. Crowell, Jr., quoted by SMA Glen E. Morrell,
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 137

I stayed in [the Army] because a number of great NCOs and officers really showed me what the Army is all about: the camaraderie, the cohesiveness, the duty, honor and country.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
“Sgt. Maj. of Army Speaks on NCOs, Leadership, the Army Ten-Miler,”
Pentagram, 10 October 1991, p. 3

Recruiting is everyone’s responsibility. NCOs must become visible in the community and help the community know what programs are available, and they must present a positive image of the Army. In this way, NCO leaders become the force multiplier needed to reach America.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“Our Army—In Touch with America,”
ARMY, October 1995, p. 30

Today, our Army puts a lot of emphasis on individualism, professionalism and leadership. Our recruiting slogan, “be all you can be,” is aimed precisely at the attitude of our country’s youth.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“What Soldiering Is All About,”
ARMY, October 1986, p. 40

Soldiers reenlist for three reasons—command climate, job satisfaction, and the third reason is quality of life. This is the first time in our nation’s history that we have sustained a long duration fight with an all-volunteer force. We are asking our Soldiers and leaders to carry the heavy load for our nation. By ensuring our Soldiers and families maintain a high quality of life, we can ensure that they will stay in uniform and defend this nation.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston
Speech to the AUSA Resolutions Committee, 6 October 2006

For the first time we are facing a society less willing to serve its country. Most of the young men and women coming out of our schools today feel
no obligation to serve. President John F. Kennedy’s “ask not what your country can do for you” speech would probably fall on deaf ears. It is incumbent on us to reconnect with America in such a way that the youth of America find service in the Army important, meaningful, satisfying, rewarding and productive.

—SMA Robert E. Hall, “The Noncommissioned Officer Corps: Meeting the Army’s Challenges,” ARMY, October 1999, p. 36

We have a great Army and we need to keep great people in the Army. Pull together, work as close as you can together, and talk about the importance of staying in the military, and why you should want to stay, because it’s a great family.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley, AUSA Family Forum I, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, 6 October 2003

Safety

Another form of protection for our Soldiers during war and peace is safety.


No matter how many commercials, memorandums or statistics are out there, nothing takes the place of leaders at every level talking safety and then leading by example. I charge all leaders with enforcing safety in their units. It breaks my heart to see Soldiers who have served honorably in harm’s way, only to return home and die in a car or motorcycle accident. Some say we cannot do much about it. I disagree. Soldiers must plan their activities in advance; leaders and Soldiers must remain accountable and set the example. We can make a difference.


In every war we have ever had, more people were killed because of Soldiers not doing things
to standard and not doing things according to the safety rules that we teach.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
“SMA Kidd Defines Roles,” Sentinel, 12 March 1993, p. 3

Who has the most influence on safety in your unit? The safety officer? The commander? No. You do! You, the noncommissioned officer, have the single greatest chance to make safety happen in your unit.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Aviation Safety Is NCO Business,”
U.S. Army Aviation Digest, January 1986, p. 18

Because of the operational tempo that you have right now, you need to make sure that you’re . . . focused on safety. [Even] something as small as . . . [wearing] seatbelts, I’d ask you to continue to focus on those safety-related items, and in everything that you do you should make a risk assessment. On everything that you do.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference,
AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, 6 October 2003

I challenge every noncommissioned officer to develop and enforce a tough, caring attitude for the safety of our Soldiers, both on and off duty.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
“From the Top,” Army Trainer, Fall 1989, p. 5

Keep in mind that the costly shortcuts and failures to follow procedures are most likely to happen when you are not there, so make it a habit to be there. Be there. Watch. Ask questions. And don’t be there only in fair weather; it’s more likely the faults are going to occur when the weather is cold, wet and miserable. If your troops are out working in those conditions, get out there with them. Do what you can to improve the conditions, but above all, make your Soldiers do the job safely.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Aviation Safety Is NCO Business,”
U.S. Army Aviation Digest, January 1986, p. 19

Safety is a key element of all that we do. Leaders are expected to conduct risk assessments
prior to every mission, brief their Soldiers on potential dangers and actions to take, and conduct after-action reviews following the operation.

The risk assessment process is critical to successful operations. Our five-step process involves identifying hazards, assessing those hazards, making decisions, implementing controls to mitigate hazard, and supervising. The last step—supervising—is the essential piece that makes it all work.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston, Statement before the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee of Total Force, 25 February 2004

The Sergeant Major of the Army

A bright page was added to the 191-year history of the U.S. Army in mid-July at a colorful ceremony at the Pentagon marking the appointment of the first Sergeant Major of the Army.

—“This Is the Man,” Army Digest, September 1966, p. 5

[The SMA] forges a new link between headquarters and the field.

—“SGM Wooldridge—Enlisted Advisor, Consultant, Spokesman,” Army Digest, December 1966, p. 49

Most of the time I’ve seen my role [as SMA] to be like the slick duck hunter who lays back and waits for the right time to get in a shot.


After a week in office, [SMA William A. Connelly] told GEN [Edward C.] Meyer that he didn’t yet know how to be Sergeant Major of the Army. The chief simply replied, “I don’t know how to be Chief of Staff yet, either.”

—Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 124

Some people don’t really realize what the Sergeant Major of the Army does, or what his responsibilities are. My responsibility to you is to collect all of the information I can and . . . bring it back to the Army staff and Congress and the
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and anybody else that will listen about issues. So it’s important for . . . you to get up and tell it like it is. I can’t figure out what issues are if you don’t tell me.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley, 
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference, 
AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, 
6 October 2003

[When selected as the SMA] I was proud; I was honored; and, let’s face it, I was a little scared thinking of what lay ahead. [Later] I realized that I was, in fact, qualified to do this job, and do it well. From that point on, all the doubts that had plagued me in the beginning suddenly disappeared and I faced each new day with the powerful self-confidence it takes to succeed. The most important thing I always remembered was where I came from. I was a Soldier who had dug slit trenches, pulled KP and guard duty, and crawled in the mud. It was that Soldier that I came to represent, and I did my best every day I was Sergeant Major of the Army.

—SMA George W. Dunaway, 
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, pp. 61-62

The newly designated position of SMA has no precedent in the Army. It marks a new high in recognizing the importance of our NCOs.

—GEN Harold K. Johnson, 
“SMA’s Role Evolves, Grows,” The NCO Journal, 
Summer 1995, p. 44

The Major Command Command Sergeants Major Conference . . . was something the Army did not have prior to the establishment of a Sergeant Major of the Army. Soldiers of all grades and ranks, from all levels, had an opportunity to present ideas and recommendations for improving the Army’s morale, training, readiness, proficiency and anything else that could be improved. They simply made suggestions to their immediate enlisted supervisor. Suggestions were consolidated at each level and submitted to the next higher level . . . . This gave the enlisted Soldier a voice that was heard at the very top, a voice he had never had
Before. [This way] we got lots of things approved that would never have even surfaced through the officers’ chain of command. Even the things that were disapproved were at least recorded and copies of everything considered were sent to all commands afterward. That was an excellent way of informing commanders Army-wide of the things that interested Soldiers.

—SMA George W. Dunaway, Center of Military History Interview, 1990, pp. 39–40

One of the best tools that has been developed to realize harmony and understanding is the Annual Major Command Sergeants Major Conference.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge, “Contact Point with the Top for the Soldier in the Field,” ARMY, October 1967, p. 53

I think the Sergeant Major of the Army’s job is to support and keep the Chief of Staff informed about the enlisted concerns in the Army, and let him know how Soldiers are training and living at the canteen-cup level.

—SMA Julius W. Gates, Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 154

In [SMA William O. Wooldridge’s] opinion, the Chief of Staff [GEN Harold K. Johnson] was gratified that most senior noncommissioned officers regarded the creation of the office of Sergeant Major of the Army as “one of the finest things that had happened to the noncommissioned officer corps in recent memory.”


[The SMA] will identify problems affecting enlisted personnel and recommend appropriate solutions. He will advise on the initiation of and content of plans for the professional education, growth, and advancement of non-commissioned officers, individually and collectively. He will advise the Chief of Staff on all matters pertaining primarily to enlisted personnel, including but
not limited to morale, welfare, training, clothing, insignia, equipment, pay and allowances, customs and courtesies of the service, enlistment and reenlistment, discipline and promotion policies. He will be available to provide advice to any board or commission dealing with enlisted personnel matters.

—GEN Harold K. Johnson to the first SMA, William O. Wooldridge, Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 9

The most important mission of the Sergeant Major of the Army is providing direct communication between the Soldier and the Army leadership.


[The most rewarding aspect of being Sergeant Major of the Army was] being in the position to influence Army-wide policies pertaining to enlisted personnel, and getting top-level attention and focus on matters that never got to the top prior to the establishment of the Sergeant Major of the Army position.

—SMA George W. Dunaway, Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 68

[As SMA] I wanted to make sure that policies were enforceable by noncommissioned officers in the field. I also wanted to ensure Soldiers could live with whatever was recommended.


Over the years, the SMAs have directly influenced decisions on a number of enlisted issues. A partial list includes: creating and hosting the first Command Sergeants Major Conference in Washington, D.C., in 1966; making a relatively bump-free transition to an all-volunteer force in the early 1970s; enforcing draft registration; establishing the first sergeant and sergeants major courses at Fort Bliss, Texas; linking NCO school
attendance to promotion; and fine-tuning the former Skills Qualification Test as an evaluation tool.

—from SSG David Abrams,
“SMA’s Role Evolves, Grows,”
The NCO Journal, Summer 1995, p. 45

The Army will be forever indebted to General Harold K. Johnson for establishing the SMA position. There are countless significant improvements that were made and will continue to be made as a result of the influence of the Sergeants Major of the Army.

—from SMA George W. Dunaway,
Center of Military History Interview, 1990, pp. 56–57

The intent of the Sergeant Major of the Army is to support existing programs and provide input that may affect the possibility of additional programs.

—from SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
“The Office of SMA—From Then to Now,”
The NCO Journal, Summer 1994, p. 11

The Sergeant Major of the Army . . . is the standard bearer in the development of NCOs. He is the central voice on the issues of NCO education, development, and assignment. He is the monitor of how the Army is taking care of our Soldiers and their families. He is a leader, a teacher and a role model. He establishes priorities and sets the tone and temper of the noncommissioned officer corps. He is . . . a loyal implementer of national defense programs. He must understand the past, yet have a sense of vision. He must lead by example. [He] represents our proud NCO Corps in our relationships with other Services and other nations.

—from GEN Carl E. Vuono,
Collected Works of the Thirty-first Chief of Staff, United States Army, 1991, p. 8

[The Sergeant Major of the Army is] the Soldier’s voice in the Pentagon.

—from GEN John A. Wickham, Jr.,
Collected Works of the Thirtieth Chief of Staff, United States Army, 1987, p. 258
You will report directly to me and there will be no one between your desk and mine. When you need to see me, you will use the private entrance to my office. The only other person who uses that entrance is the Secretary of the Army.

—GEN Harold K. Johnson to the first SMA, William O. Wooldridge,
“SMA’s Role Evolves, Grows,” The NCO Journal, Summer 1995, p. 44

[The establishment of the Command Sergeants Major Conferences was] one of the finest initiatives approved on behalf of the noncommissioned officer.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 52

In his initial guidance to the new Sergeant Major of the Army, [GEN John A.] Wickham [Jr.] told [SMA Glen E.] Morrell to be himself and “go do the things that needed to be done in the Army.” Morrell later stated that “what a Sergeant Major of the Army does depends on the Chief of Staff.” General Wickham listened . . . and, according to Morrell, “we pushed a lot of things through that would not have been accomplished if it hadn’t been for all of us working together.”

—Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 139

I never set a goal of becoming the Sergeant Major of the Army. It was a moment I never expected. All I ever wanted to do was be the best Soldier and leader I could, and take care of my family, my Soldiers and their families. . . . After a year on the job, I have found that while I may have a new title, my job description has not changed much. It is still all about soldiering, and remembering that nothing is more important than taking care of Soldiers.

—SMA Robert E. Hall,
“Focus on Fundamentals of Soldiering in These Tough, Turbulent Times,” ARMY, October 1998, p. 27

Now [after being appointed as the SMA] I would have the opportunity to do more for the Soldiers
than I had ever been able to do before. Now I would be in a position to change some of the things I had disliked and had heard so many complaints about. This was an honor and I vowed not to let the Soldiers down.


SMA [Jack L.] Tilley and SMA [Robert E.] Hall are both mentors for many of us, and [to] them and all of our retired veterans . . . we stand in your legacy, and it’s the legacy that you left for all of us that wear the uniform today that allows us to continue to carry on and continue to make the Army that much better.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston, SMA Awards Luncheon, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, 6 October 2008

The two responsibilities the “Chief” [GEN Edward C. Meyer] gave me [were] to provide open and frank advice and criticism of what I see in the field, and to oversee the continued development of the NCO Corps.


I’ve got to know what your feelings are. When I do come around, don’t caveat anything. Don’t say “Everything’s okay. This is a perfect world. We don’t have any problems.” Tell is like it is. That’s how I get my information. Be straight forward right up front and tell me how you feel.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley, Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 2000

Soldiers

The American Soldier is a proud one and he demands professional competence in his leaders. In battle he wants to know that the job is going to be done right, with no unnecessary casualties. The noncommissioned officer wearing the chevron is supposed to be the best Soldier in the platoon.
and he is supposed to know how to perform all the duties expected of him. The American Soldier expects his sergeant to be able to teach him how to do his job.

—GEN Omar N. Bradley, quoted by SMA Glen E. Morrell, “NCOs Are the ‘Vital Link in the Chain of Command.’” ARMY, October 1985, p. 65

The most impressive thing about any Army is the individual Soldier. He will always be the one responsible for taking and holding the ground in support of our foreign policy, mission, goals and objectives. Even with sophisticated technology and advanced equipment, an Army cannot fight, sustain and win a war without individual, quality Soldiers.


Soldiers . . . expect their sergeants to be professional, set the example and kick them in the butt when they need it.

—SMA Julius W. Gates, “Noncom Know How,” Soldiers, August 1987, p. 21

Soldiers are intelligent, well-motivated and will tax the abilities of those appointed over them with their demands for aggressive, positive leadership to provide the guidance they need to become professionals.


My main job is getting out . . . to the field to talk with you, the Soldier. Not just to talk, but observe you at work and off-duty. To inform myself about your welfare, your views, to learn what you and I, working together, can do to help build a better Army.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland, “The SMA Talks to the Troops Man to Man,” Soldiers, December 1971, p. 4

Soldiers will thrive so long as they are cared for personally and professionally, as long as they see
opportunity for professional growth and are given freedom to learn and be trusted to make decisions.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
“The American GI—Person of the Century: ‘Our Heritage and Legacy’,”
ARMY, October 2000, p. 38

I draw my energy from [Soldiers].

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
“Kidd’s Post Ties Run Deep,”
Fort Hood Sentinel, 4 May 1995, p. A12

Whether or not a war is popular among the nation’s people, and whether or not it is supported by the legislators, has no bearing on what the Soldiers do and think. They perform their duties magnificently and bravely. They don’t make the policies, and they don’t declare war. But they fight, they bleed and they die. And they do it unhesitatingly. They should be appreciated and recognized for it, without regard for the political aspects of the war.

—SMA George W. Dunaway,
Center of Military History Interview, 1990, p. 65

Soldiers . . . expect the noncommissioned officer to be technically proficient, up front and honest with them.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
"NCOs Are the 'Vital Link in the Chain of Command.'” ARMY, October 1985, p. 64

On a visit to one of our installations, I was shown an automated system which is designed to significantly improve artillery fire support. Being a former tanker, I was impressed by a system which, according to reports, will revolutionize the battlefield.

As I was leaving, the young Soldier who had operated the control console and had overheard my praise of the system stood up as I walked past him and said, “Sergeant major, this sure is a great machine, but it doesn’t do anything unless I tell it to.”

—SMA William A. Connelly,
“The Soldier Remains Our Ultimate Weapon,”
ARMY, October 1979, p. 23
The American Soldier . . . is unbeatable in war. . . . We cannot give the American Soldier too much credit. . . . He deserves everything we can do for him and he deserves all the respect we can show him.

—SMA George W. Dunaway,
Center of Military History Interview, 1990, p. 41

Our . . . Soldiers should look as good as they are.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
"From the Top," Army Trainer, Fall 1989, p. 5

Readiness is the best way to truly take care of Soldiers.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
"The Threshold of a New Chapter in Army History," ARMY, October 1992, p. 39

If you listen carefully, you can hear them. They are the echoes of marching Soldiers. . . . From the numerous camps, posts and stations around the world, these echoes rise to form a mighty thunder, a thunder made by the best-trained, best-led, best-equipped Army in the history of the world.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
"The Thunder of a Mighty Fighting Force," ARMY, October 1988, p. 41

The essence of being a Soldier always remains the same.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
"Our Army—In Touch with America," ARMY, October 1995, p. 32

The American Soldier is among the greatest assets this country has. Generations of Americans will be able to enjoy the freedom that American Soldiers have defended and preserved in war after war throughout our history.

—SMA George W. Dunaway,
Center of Military History Interview, 1990, p. 66

Soldiers must know that NCOs care, that they can approach the NCO for guidance and direction, and that NCOs can make things happen when a difficult situation arises.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
"Hard Work, Leadership Still Keys to Quality," ARMY, October 1984, p. 52
The most precious asset we have in the U.S. Army is the Soldier; the scarcest asset is time.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
“For NCOs: Leadership, Hard Work and Training,”
ARMY, October 1980, p. 24

If you’re technically and tactically proficient, comply with Army standards and policies, and lead by example, you won’t have any problem. If you don’t, you’ll have problems with your Soldiers. You can’t fool them. You never could, and you never will.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Soldiers Deserve the Best Leaders,”
Soldiers, December 1985, p. 8

Our specialists fourth-class and below want a sergeant who acts like he or she is in charge. They want a professional who sets standards and then enforces them. They want a leader who will stick up for them. But, most important, they want somebody who knows the regulations, enforces them fairly and gets on with the job at hand.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
“NCOs: It’s Time to Get Tough,”
ARMY, October 1981, pp. 29-30

Experience . . . the thrill that comes from being a Soldier.

—GEN John A. Wickham, Jr.,
address at the retirement review in honor of SMA Glen Morrell, Collected Works of the Thirtieth Chief of Staff, United States Army, 1987, p. 258

What I have seen during this past year has come as a revelation to me: the scope, the depth, the know-how, the ingrained dedication of the members of the Army team. . . . From taps to reveille, from reveille to taps, wherever the cooking fires of our bivouacs burn, you will find the American Soldier on the job because he has a job to do.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,
“Contact Point with the Top for the Soldier in the Field,” ARMY, October 1967, p. 72
Don’t just talk about taking care of Soldiers. Take care of them; show them your support.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,

Soldiers need to keep faith in this Army, their leaders and, above all, themselves.

—SMA Robert E. Hall,
"Focus on Fundamentals of Soldiering in These Tough, Turbulent Times,"
ARMY, October 1998, p. 28

Soldiers are the guardians of freedom, liberty and the sacred values and trust of the American people and our nation.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
"What Soldiering Is All About,"
ARMY, October 1986, p. 39

I believe focusing on the fundamentals is what is most important. Whether it is training, leadership, readiness or values, it is the basics that make the difference in the end. My charge to you is that we never lose sight of this at the junior enlisted or NCO levels.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
"The American GI—Person of the Century: ‘Our Heritage and Legacy,’"
ARMY, October 2000, p. 38

[I never saw] the morale of a unit increase as much as when we got seventeen brand-new M60 tanks. It was like every Soldier had a brand-new Cadillac.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 116

The Army is Force XXI, it’s Army After Next. What we’ve got to realize is that as we master that technology of the 21st century, there’s a Soldier on the other end of every piece of technology, and that Soldier deserves great leadership.

—SMA Robert E. Hall,
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 1998
Standards

Training in our Army of today is easy. Because we don’t have to worry about establishing standards; we have a standard for everything. . . . Our trouble comes when we leaders don’t know the standards. Or when we fail our Soldiers and our unit by not enforcing the known standards.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
“From the Top,” Army Trainer, Fall 1989, p. 5

Enforcing standards is training, is leadership and is safety!

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
“Enforce Standards to Save Limbs and Lives,”
The NCO Journal, Spring 1993, p. 5

Everyone wants a good unit—and could have one if only they would demand that standards be met. . . . People talk a lot about Ranger battalions. Every unit in the Army could be like a Ranger unit. What the Rangers have is a high set of standards that the leadership and the Soldiers must meet. The leadership demands and ensures standards are met.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“As the SMA Sees It,” Army Trainer,
Fall 1984, pp. 22-23

We are a standards-based organization. We empower our leaders—noncommissioned officers—to enforce the standards. Any time a Soldier is killed in training or something bad happens, it is usually because of a failure to enforce standards.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston,
speaking to the 529th MP Company
in Heidelberg, Germany, 26 October 2007

There are standards in the Army—there’s weight control standards, there’s PT standards, there’s hair policy—there’s standards for everything you do. Enforce standards. Period. There’s not a different standard for anybody. The standards that you live by are the standards that I live by. . . . Sometimes Soldiers walk around and question whether or not that person meets the height and weight standards. In some cases I do, too. The only
difference is, I’m going to look a little harder. If you see something that’s wrong, fix it. If you walk by something that’s wrong, you’ve just established a new standard in the United States Army. So stay focused.

—SMA Jack L. Tilley,
Sergeant Major of the Army Conference with Outstanding Soldiers, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 2002

Are you committed to excellence? Excellence means high standards, pure and simple. All leaders must maintain and enforce the Army’s standards. The greatest disservice we can do to our Army and our Soldiers is to lower our standards because then we are saying that we do not value our Soldiers. Maintaining standards is the key to our success.

—SMA Robert E. Hall,

Don’t just shoot for the standard. Use the standard as a springboard to even greater achievements.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,

Enforcing the standards is a tough job. It requires intestinal fortitude and impartial fairness.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
“Sergeant to Sergeant,” Sergeants’ Business, March-April 1988, p. 4

Success

When you don’t have quantity you make up for it with quality and staying power.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,
“First, and Getting Firster,” ARMY, October 1975, p. 24

You’re not being paid by how hard you work, but by what you accomplish.

—SMA William A. Connelly to MSG Dale W. Ward, telephone conversation with M. M. Yamamoto, 28 May 1996
You can never see the full development of yourself down the road. But there’s a certain distance you can see. I believe if you go as far as you can see and then get there, you’ll be able to see a little bit farther, and so on.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
"SMA McKinney Launches Each Day with NCO Creed," The NCO Journal, Fall 1995, p. 14

In the absence of any formal schooling . . . I watch a guy who’s been successful.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 75

Leaders at all levels must understand that the keys to success are effective communication and demonstrated leadership.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
"Hard Work, Leadership Still Keys to Quality;" ARMY, October 1984, p. 52

I think dreams are very important. That’s what causes people to strive to achieve certain goals and to do their very best.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
"Sgt. Maj. of Army Speaks on NCOs, Leadership, the Army Ten-Miler;" Pentagram, 10 October 1991, p. 3

Nothing is out of reach if you set high goals and work toward them sincerely.

—SMA George W. Dunaway,
Center of Military History Interview, 1990, p. 38

The desire to excel must become [an NCO’s] way of life.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
"Hard Work, Leadership Still Keys to Quality;" ARMY, October 1984, p. 52

The better prepared you are, the better chance you have at being successful.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
I believe that if you go back and look at the Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer it will lead you to success.


Reputation is what people think you are; character is what you are—that is the staying power.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell, "The NCO: More Vital Than Ever to Readiness," ARMY, October 1983, p. 28

Quality must be judged in two ways: in terms of accomplishment and in terms of attitude.


Teamwork, leadership and dedication [are] the winning formula that has enabled the Army to maintain quality despite turbulent circumstances.


If you can’t hack it, pack it.

—SMA William A. Connelly, in many addresses to Soldiers, telephone conversation with M. M. Yamamoto, 28 May 1996

You can take a lot of punishment if you learn not to complain about the little stuff.


To be a professional, career Soldier . . . can’t be done in a 40-hour work week.


When General [Creighton W.] Abrams [Jr.] interviewed me for this job he asked me what I would do to get our Army moving again if I were chief of staff. I told him the success of the Army
is in direct proportion to the involvement of the noncommissioned officer corps.

—SMA Leon L. Van Autreve,
“As I See It,” Soldiers, July 1975, p. 7

NCOs . . . are the ones who [provide] the small unit leadership so necessary for our Army’s success.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Sergeant to Sergeant,” Sergeants’ Business, May-June 1987, p. 3

There’s nothing in the world that can take the place of persistence. Talent won’t, genius won’t, education won’t. If you’re persistent and determined to keep going, you’ll get there.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“SMA McKinney Launches Each Day with NCO Creed,” The NCO Journal, Fall 1995, p. 14

As the system improves, the race will not only go to the swift but the ones with long distance endurance.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,

Teamwork

Teamwork gets it done every time.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 167

[The commander’s objectives can] only be obtained through two axes of advance—the NCO and officer working together.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,

[Soldiers are] discovering a pride in resourcefulness and the esprit of teamwork.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,
“First, and Getting Firster,” ARMY, October 1975, p. 24

Senior noncommissioned officers now accompany their commanders to Washington
each year, where they discuss [noncommissioned officers’] recommendations. From the 1966 and 1967 conferences came proposals for changes in virtually every area affecting the enlisted ranks. . . . None would have reached successful decision, however, without the cooperation of the staffs of the Department of the Army. These agencies have worked tirelessly to develop and guide these recommendations through all levels of approval.


Teams are the means by which the mission is accomplished.


If we are to live up to the responsibilities that history has placed upon this great land, then it is important that we know we can count on each other. It starts with the basic element of our Army—squads; and is true of the total Army—active, Guard and Reserve. We need each other. We need the other services, and we need the support of the American public.


One of the major ingredients in a well-rounded organization is teamwork. Troops are taught teamwork in their jobs, but it takes more than that. There has to be a good sports program and there has to be some social life that involves the family.

—SMA George W. Dunaway, Center of Military History Interview, 1990, p. 14

[Good leaders] enjoy watching Soldiers develop as individuals and then, for those individuals to grow into teams.

It doesn’t matter whether you’re combat arms, combat support or combat service support, everybody has a role to play in making the Army successful.


Training

First things first. Training is the most important thing we do in the Army. Don’t ever forget that. Don’t lose sight of it when you are wrestling with all those other alligators. . . . A lot of people say, “Well, I have a lot of training distractors; I have to do this; I have to comply with that.” . . . There is time for good training if we do the planning and follow guidance. Make it happen. Do not use those distractors as a crutch.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell, “As the SMA Sees It,” Army Trainer, Fall 1984, pp. 21, 24

Motivation and training go hand in hand.

—SMA William G. Bainbridge, “Quality, Training and Motivation,” ARMY, October 1976, p. 28

If you are not training because you are short people, then treat them as if they were battle casualties and ask yourself, “How do I still accomplish my mission?”


The most critical training is conducted at unit level by unit leaders. Unit training starts with sergeants who train young Soldiers (including newly commissioned lieutenants) to become members of the unit team that serve and win.


One of the principal ways an NCO looks after the welfare of his Soldiers is through training—it’s about being a subject matter expert. We want our
young Soldiers to study, to train and be the best Soldiers they can be, because as they move up into positions of increased responsibility they will be responsible for teaching from a position of experience. It’s the experience that allows our NCOs to be trainers.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston,
Presentation at the Pentagon, 8 January 2009

Training allows the Soldier to employ technology. Technology enhances the way we fight.

—SMA Gene C. McKinney,
“Our Army—In Touch with America,”
ARMY, October 1995, p. 32

The best form of Soldier protection, if we are required to fight, is prior training conducted to the prescribed standards. Simply stated, if we accomplish our training requirements right, when needed, we will inflict more damage on the enemy than he can withstand, and subsequently the fighting will stop.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
“Sergeant to Sergeant,” Sergeants’ Business,
January-February 1988, p. 4

It’s training that defeats the enemy and saves lives.

—SMA William O. Wooldridge,
“Headed for Combat,” Army Digest,
January 1968, p. 11

Junior NCOs and Soldiers . . . are the leaders of tomorrow and the people who represent the legacy of our labor. If they are well trained, we can rest easy.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
“Keep Up with Change in ’80s,”
ARMY, October 1982, p. 28

All NCOs in our Army (active, National Guard and Reserve) are trainers.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
“Sergeant to Sergeant,” Sergeants’ Business,
March-April 1988, p. 4

Simulators will not, and are not, intended to replace live firing. Those psychological aspects of
firing have to be experienced first hand. Gunners
have to see and feel that weapon go off, experience
the smoke and noise, and watch that round go
downrange and hit the target. Live fire is crucial to
those first round hits. And we cannot afford to give
our adversaries the chance to shoot back.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“As the SMA Sees It,” Army Trainer, Fall 1984, p. 24

If we truly care about Soldiers, we must care
about quality training that’s tough and also safe. Good training means strong leadership, with
you and your fellow noncommissioned officers
fully responsible for individual training. You are
responsible for the training of Soldiers in their
individual skills.

—GEN John A. Wickham, Jr., quoted by
SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“NCOs Are the ‘Vital Link in the Chain of
Command.’” ARMY, October 1985, p. 64

“No more Task Force Smiths.” Everyone knows
the use of the phrase is intended to focus attention
on training, but [SMA William O.] Wooldridge
would amend it to say: “No more Armies that
produce Task Force Smiths.”

—“But You’re a Combat Veteran: You Know
Everything,” The NCO Journal, Fall 1992, p. 15

The habits that are the basis of professional
competence are at the heart of the training
challenge.

—SMA William A. Connelly,
“Keep Up with Change in ’80s,”
ARMY, October 1982, pp. 29-30

Once we get [Soldiers through] school, then
we have to sustain that training out there. The
training has to be sustained by the leadership in the
particular unit to which the Soldier is assigned.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Soldiers Deserve the Best Leaders,”
Soldiers, December 1985, p. 8

Right now in training is the time to learn how
to shoot and care for your weapons, what to
expect and not expect from your equipment, how
to use a compass, how to read a map, how to take
advantage of the terrain, how to give yourself and others first aid and how to keep in top physical shape. These are just a few of the skills that are going to take you through combat, not just to combat. Learning these things will help you develop the confidence that overcomes fear in battle.


Soldiers will respect an individual who cares about their welfare, which includes ensuring that they’re properly trained.


Training is tough because combat is tougher.


We must always focus on the fundamentals of soldiering. We must get back to tasks, conditions and standards, and to tough, realistic, relevant training done to standard.


You never forget skills when you’ve been trained well.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell, “Performance, Character and Contact,” Soldiers, January 1984, p. 9

The proper use of the Soldier’s time, spent learning how to do and practicing his job, is the only way to give our Soldiers what they deserve. They know, perhaps better than we do, that in the words of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, “The best form of ‘welfare’ for the troops is first-class training.”

Everyone in our Army recognizes the importance of the noncommissioned officer as a trainer. Drill sergeants mold and build our young recruits into Soldiers. Unit sergeants and corporals continue to train our Soldiers individually and as a team to accomplish the unit mission. In the final analysis, it is the noncommissioned officer who will lead our nation’s best against the odds and win.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
“From the Top,” Army Trainer, Fall 1989, p. 4

Soldiers know when training is being conducted up to standards and proper objectives are being met. It is a good feeling to train hard and accomplish constructive objectives. No one wants to waste time during “make-work” training that does not accomplish anything. Time is too valuable.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Hard Work, Leadership Still Keys to Quality,” ARMY, October 1984, p. 52

When you spot something that is being done wrong, or could be done better, instead of just making an “on the spot correction” (which is fine), go one step further and make a five- or ten-minute training situation out of the problem.

—SMA William A. Connelly,

Soldier performance is the measure for effective training. If our Soldiers can perform well, then—and only then—can we be satisfied with our training program.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
“From the Top,” Army Trainer, Fall 1989, p. 5

Everything that the Army’s done, when you want to get something accomplished, it requires boots on the ground. And of course, preparing Soldiers for success in a deployed theater means that you’re set up for success before they even get there. It’s all about training and it’s all about education.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston,
SMA Conference, AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, October 2007
The Army is developing, experimenting, analyzing, deciding and developing some more. At each step, change affects all that we do. New equipment spurs change in doctrine, which then affects training, leader development, force design and people. The bottom line and the nucleus for warfighting success, however, are the training of the ultimate weapon—the Soldier. . . . The Army must produce Soldiers who are better able to shoot, move and communicate on those future battlefields with equipment that facilitates success. It is the NCO corps who trains those Soldiers and accepts the responsibility and accountability for the individual, crew, squad, section and team training that results in that razor-sharp edge of readiness.

—SMA Robert E. Hall,
“The Noncommissioned Officer Corps: Meeting the Army’s Challenges,”
ARMY, October 1999, p. 36

Unit training . . . builds character and, more importantly, instills values. . . . We must [train] in peacetime because there is not time in war.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“What Soldiering Is All About,”
ARMY, October 1986, p. 40

**Trust**

Trust establishes the character within a command and ties leaders and subordinates together. Camaraderie and cohesion are products of demonstrated trust between leaders and subordinates. Trusting a Soldier to perform a critical task places his reputation and pride on the line. The mission or task becomes very personal; the stakes are high when trust is involved. The weakest leader or Soldier will try harder when placed in the limelight under fire. When the trusted Soldier is successful and that success is recognized by the leader, the Soldier gains confidence. With each success the attitude and proficiency of the Soldier improve.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“Hard Work, Leadership Still Keys to Quality,”
ARMY, October 1984, p. 52
A Soldier is the most-trusted profession in America. Americans have trust in you because you trust each other.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,  
“Top Soldier Visits Troops in Mogadishu,”  
The Somalia Sand Paper,  
20 September 1993, p. 4

Soldiers want to know that they can trust their leaders—commissioned and noncommissioned. It is easy to get Soldiers to trust you—just do what is right.

—SMA Robert E. Hall,  
“Focus on Fundamentals of Soldiering in These Tough, Turbulent Times,”  
ARMY, October 1998, p. 30

Soldiers must possess integrity in order to build trust and confidence in themselves, our leadership and the American public.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,  
“What Soldiering Is All About,”  
ARMY, October 1986, p. 41

Values

My love of country, the way I was brought up, and my family life helped sustain me [as a POW].

—SMA William G. Bainbridge,  
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 105

High standards and values . . . are still fully relevant to young people.

—SMA Silas L. Copeland,  
“The NCO Must Grow with the Army,”  
ARMY, October 1972, p. 25

Loyalty . . . was the primary trait I looked for in Soldiers. . . . I learned early to be loyal to my bosses and subordinates.

—SMA George W. Dunaway,  
Center of Military History Interview, 1990, p. 13

What is all this [emphasis placed on values and devotion to duty] about? It is all about surviving in this hectic, imperfect world; it is all about being free to live life to its fullest . . . and in that great
intangible virtue possessed by all Americans—a commitment to service. It is about keeping our nation free.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“What Soldiering Is All About,”
ARMY, October 1986, p. 40

Our Soldiers won every battle [in Vietnam]—every encounter with the enemy. We should hold our heads high—because we did our duty.

—SMA Julius W. Gates,
Gillespie et al., The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 151

People value honesty. They value integrity. They value competence and courage and all those kinds of things.

— SMA Richard A. Kidd,
“Lessons on Leadership,”
Soldiers, February 1995, p. 20

Values are what built this country. Values are what keep us going.

—SMA Glen E. Morrell,
“What Soldiering Is All About,”
ARMY, October 1986, p. 39

The only way [the SMA coin] can tarnish is to do something unprofessional. No amount of Brasso will polish it; you have to do something exceptional to bring the polish back. But I know you won’t let it tarnish.

—SMA Richard A. Kidd,
“Top Soldier Visits Troops in Mogadishu,”
The Somalia Sand Paper,
September 20, 1993, p. 2

Don’t let anybody tell you you are anything less than the cream of society. You should be proud to talk about what you, as a Soldier, do every day.

—SMA Kenneth O. Preston,
visit to Joint Multinational Training Command,
28 October 2007
# Chiefs of Staff and Sergeants Major of the Army

## 1966–Present

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The Sergeants Major of the Army have performed invaluable services for the noncommissioned officers and enlisted Soldiers of the U.S. Army. They have helped professionalize the Noncommissioned Officer Corps; they have represented the interests of the enlisted force in the highest councils of the Army and have helped bring about many positive changes in policy; and they have raised the morale of Soldiers in visits to duty stations around the globe. The powers of the office allowed this to happen, but the men who held that office during its [more than 40] years made it happen, too. Their strength, their insight, their determination and their devotion to duty greatly contribute to forming the superb Army that the United States has today.

—Gillespie et al.,
The Sergeants Major of the Army, 1995, p. 46