

Two Centuries of Leadership And Selfless Service— The Army NCO

By **GEN Gordon R. Sullivan**

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“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

I have been the beneficiary of wisdom and advice from Army noncommissioned officers for more than 50 years. I have had the privilege of being shaped, molded, trained and advised by the magnificent Army Noncommissioned Officer Corps

from my cadet days at Norwich University up to the present, as I work with our current Sergeant Major of the Army and our tremendous NCO staff members at AUSA national headquarters.

During my years as a young officer, I worked





Medal of Honor awardees reflect decades of NCOs' selfless service. Top, left to right: SGT Alvin C. York, World War I; SGT Audie Murphy, World War II; SGT Cornelius H. Charlton, Korea. Center, left to right: SFC Webster Anderson, Vietnam; MSG Gary Ivan Gordon and SFC Randall D. Shughart, Mogadishu, Somalia. Bottom, left to right: SFC Paul Ray Smith, Iraq; SFC Ross McGinnis, Iraq; then-SSG Jared C. Monti, Afghanistan.

with many outstanding NCOs: 1SG Otis C. Dillon, 1/66th Armor, when I was a second lieutenant at Fort Hood, Texas; SFC James Allen, A Company, 3/40 Armor, when I was in Korea; CSM Doug Horn, 3/32nd Armor, 3rd Armored Division, in Germany; CSM Jimmie Johnson, 4/73 Armor, Böblingen, Germany; CSM Bob Lindsay, 1st Brigade, 3rd Armored Division, in Germany; and CSM Julio Diaz, 1st Infantry Division, at Fort Riley, Kan. All of these men got me started off on the right foot (when not marching) in leading, training and caring for our soldiers. Each “noncom,” a combat veteran, kept me on the right azimuth. During my tenure as Army Chief of Staff, our Army was superbly and professionally served by my strong right arm, SMA Richard A. Kidd.

It was at the full honors funeral for SMA William G. Bainbridge in Arlington National Cemetery that I had a chance to reflect on the immense contributions in leadership and selfless service that our NCO Corps has given our Army and our nation.

SGT Alvin York, who gained national fame and earned the Medal of Honor for his resolute fight against great odds

in the Argonne Forest in 1918; SGT Audie Murphy, who was wounded three times during World War II while earning the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, two Silver Stars and a battlefield commission; SGT Cornelius Charlton, who assumed command when his platoon leader was wounded and earned the Medal of Honor by leading his platoon to victory near Chipo-Ri in Korea; SFC Webster Anderson, who led his soldiers in a successful defense of their firebase in Vietnam in spite of serious wounds, earning the Medal of Honor; MSG Gary Gordon and SFC Randall Shughart, who volunteered to secure a helicopter crash site in Mogadishu and valiantly protected four critically wounded soldiers, giving their lives and earning the Medal of Honor; and SFC Paul Smith, whose selfless leadership in repelling an enemy attack on his unit’s position near the Baghdad international airport cost him his life, earned the Medal of Honor, saved the lives of many other soldiers, and carried on the best tradition of noncommissioned officer leadership and professionalism. And you can be sure it was an Army NCO—drill sergeant, platoon sergeant or squad leader—who instilled Army Values as taught by the NCO

“The choice of noncommissioned officers is an object of the greatest importance: The order and discipline of a regiment depends so much upon their behavior, that too much care cannot be taken in preferring none to that trust but those who by their merit and good conduct are entitled to it. ... It being on the noncommissioned officers that the discipline and order of a company in a great measure depend, they cannot be too circumspect in their behavior towards the men, by treating them with mildness, and at the same time obliging every one to do his duty. By avoiding too great familiarity with the men, they will not only gain their love and confidence, but be treated with a proper respect, whereas by a contrary conduct they forfeit all regard, and their authority becomes despised.”

—Baron von Steuben

Education System into the soul of Medal of Honor recipient SPC Ross McGinnis, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, who lost his life in Iraq while protecting his crew. SFC Jared C. Monti, 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, sacrificed his life in an effort to save a comrade in Afghanistan in 2006; this September he became the first soldier to receive the Medal of Honor for actions in Afghanistan. Each NCO on this roll of honor has lived all aspects of the NCO Creed.

As your AUSA President, I am pleased with the continuing leadership and energy within today’s volunteer NCO ranks across AUSA—from the Council of Trustees to chapter presidents and officers. Although most of our NCO leaders are retired, their continued contributions prove that the principles of the NCO Creed are transferable to civilian life. Thank you. Since we are celebrating the Year of the NCO, our NCO and Soldier Programs directorate—headed by CSM Jimmie Spencer, U.S. Army retired, and CSM Don Thomas, U.S. Army retired—has led the way in ideas, innovations and programs to support the Army. I am particularly proud of the 2009 editions of *The Sergeants Major of the Army: On Leadership and the Profession of Arms* and *U.S. Army Campaign Streamers: The Colors of Courage Since 1775*, both updated by the Institute of Land Warfare in honor of our great NCOs across the Army.

The strength of AUSA as the Voice for the Army—Support for the Soldier lies in our individual members, their volunteer leaders and our more than 120 chapters worldwide. As I’ve traveled around the Army this past year, I’ve been impressed with the quality and variety of activities that our grassroots chapters execute in programs for our soldiers and families. Departure and Welcome Home ceremonies; support for wounded warriors and the warrior transition units; support to Recruiting Command; and events to recognize our outstanding NCO Corps have all verified that we have the right focus in our mission and vision as an organization. I must compliment director John Davies and his great Regional Activities team for our continued success. In this Year of the NCO, a couple of John’s stalwarts are retired SGM Leroy Bussells, retiree and veteran affairs, and retired CSM Mike Levine, chapter affairs.

Our chapter activities in support of soldiers and families continue to be valuable and contribute to soldier, family

The NCO Creed

No one is more professional than I. I am a Non-commissioned 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!

and unit well-being. Their impact on tempering the dwell time for our units and soldiers gets better every day. Our web site, www.ausa.org, accounts for these activities daily. As our chapter leaders well know, CSM Levine keeps everyone up to date on the flow of such significant events through “Leader Links.” I am pleased that our two major

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

—GEN Gordon R. Sullivan and SMA Richard A. Kidd

annual training events—new chapter president training and emerging chapter leader training—have paid off every year, and both sessions keep improving.

Our Family Programs directorate, led by Sylvia Kidd, keeps growing and adding value across our Army: active, Guard and Reserve. Our successful Family Forums at our Annual Meeting in October have been particularly noteworthy. Each year, we have increased our meeting-room size and still have standing room only. The addition of Family Readiness Group leaders from U.S. Army Forces Command has increased value and energy. Our Volunteer Family of the Year program has also grown in vitality and importance. Thank you for participating—keep the quality nominations coming in.

The continued success of our professional development symposia as forums for Army-industry synergy has been beneficial to the Army and AUSA. Industry Affairs director Michael Scanlan and his team have continued to produce high-quality events that allow this Army-industry partnership to support the Army in its strategic outreach objectives. With each successive Annual Meeting, we continue to build on the success and lessons learned of previous years. The AUSA Annual Meeting continues to be the premiere event of the year for our sustaining members. This is evident in the fact that 100 percent of the available exhibit space for the 2009 meeting was sold by the end of the 2008 meeting. We have been able to maintain consistency with more than 550

sustaining member companies on our rolls during the last two years; to date, there are more than 30 sustaining member companies on the waiting list. We appreciate the support and loyalty from industry membership.

Our publications, both on paper and on the web, play a critical role in our mission as Voice for the Army. *AUSA News* has again won national awards for excellence—congratulations to John Grady and Peter Murphy and their staff. *AUSA News* provides an effective means of telling the Army story for our membership and the public. Mary French and her staff at *ARMY Magazine* have continued to cover major issues affecting the Army and highlight the extraordinary achievements of NCOs. *ARMY* recently won two awards in a national competition. Our book program, led by Dr. Roger Cirillo, continues to publish books by prize-winning authors on subjects that are important and relevant to members’ professional reading and development. In the past five years, three AUSA books have won national awards.

The Institute of Land Warfare’s extensive suite of publications continues to provide timely and insightful information on a wide range of topics related to the Army and national defense. Directors Sandra Daugherty (Programs) and COL George Coan, U.S. Army retired (National Security Studies) lead an outstanding team whose mission is to extend the influence of AUSA by informing and educating not only its members but also local, regional and national leaders and the American people on the critical nature of landpower and the importance of the U.S. Army to the nation.

The Institute of Land Warfare breakfast series got off to a great start this year with Chief of Staff of the Army GEN George W. Casey Jr. as the first guest speaker. The series

Soldiers from New York and New Jersey recite the NCO Creed at Picatinny Arsenal, N.J., in April. The 74 soldiers were inducted into the NCO Corps and recognized for their importance—and that of all noncommissioned officers—in today’s Army.



“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

continues to provide an unparalleled networking opportunity for our sustaining members located in the Washington, D.C., area, as well as Army Staff and congressional staff members. Over the past year, this series has featured a prominent list of speakers including the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and GEN Ann E. Dunwoody, commanding general of U.S. Army Materiel Command and the United States' first female four-star general.

The Lemnitzer lecture series, presented by the Institute of Land Warfare and the Army Historical Foundation, provides another opportunity for professional development as authors discuss their recent publications.

Our messages to the nation's leaders in the administration, both White House and Pentagon, as well as on Capitol Hill are more important than ever. The year 2009 is a transition year, with a new President and a new session of Congress beginning their work. The fiscal year (FY) 2010 budget is a transition presidential budget, even though there have been some 50 system kills. The remainder of this calendar year will see formulation of a new and reshaped budget for FY 2011, the development of a new National Security strategy using Quadrennial Defense Review 2010 and the unveiling of a new acquisition strategy for the replacement elements for Future Combat Systems.

AUSA's strategic outreach to Congress for the Army and its soldiers is led by our Government Affairs directorate. Our congressional activities are extremely effective and work in conjunction with our grassroots legislative resolutions process. One of the highlights is the weekly electronic "Legislative Newsletter." To put it in tactical terms, this newsletter by e-mail is on time and on target to give chapter leaders and members the information they need about activities in Congress and the administration. Using our resolutions as a guide, AUSA uses personal outreach, letter writing campaigns, Capitol Hill events and targeted publications to get the message out. Our current legislative resolutions focus on peo-

CSM Julie Walter, command sergeant major of the 702nd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Stryker), is currently deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

ple—soldiers, families and Army civilians—readiness and force transformation.

For soldiers, families and Army civilians, we will urge Congress to: close the pay gap for both soldiers and Army civilians; continue to fund high-quality health care; bar any TRICARE fee increases; enact legislation to repeal the VA offset on retirees' military entitlement (concurrent receipt); and protect the full value of retiree and annuitant income.

Our resolutions on readiness include urging the administration and Congress to increase base defense budget funding to at least 5 percent of GDP, with the Army's share at least 28 percent; support the rebalance of the force between the active and reserve components; fund operations and maintenance, individual and unit training, and Army recruiting and retention programs; fund timely supplemental appropriation support for resetting the force; and authorize and fund an active duty Army of 700,000.

Resolutions concerning force transformation include pushing for support and funding of advanced technology development; provision of stable and sufficient research, development, test and evaluation funding and funding for modernization and enhancement programs; and acceleration of funding for high-payoff weapon systems that support the Army's modernization requirements for current and Future Forces.

Our theme and agenda for the Army will remain steadfast: budget share, end strength, compensation, maintenance and modernization, quality of life and readiness. While the numbers may appear to be up, we cannot relax our message or support for soldiers and families. Just as our wonderful NCOs have remained steadfast and true to their mission and their soldiers, we at AUSA will remain committed to keeping our Army strong. ★



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