photo by Master Sgt. Dave Melancon

MY LT & ME: 2nd Lt. Rose Guerrero, 2nd platoon leader, 50th Engineer Co., and her platoon sergeant, Staff Sgt. Barry Arnold, discuss the bridging operation's final steps.

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Cover photo by
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Our mission is to provide a forum for the open exchange of ideas and information, to support training, education and development of the NCO Corps and to foster a closer bond among its members.

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About This ISSUE

I recall my interview with Sergeant Major of the Army Jack L. Tilley in the first issue of the *NCO Journal* with him stating, "We (NCOs) also get paid to assist and develop officers. We have to make sure that we're communicating with our officers."

That particular quote summarizes this edition of the *NCO Journal*. When first coming up with themes for the magazine last year, it wasn't hard to come up with the Officer/NCO Relationship.

Seven years ago the editors at the time featured an edition on this same topic and, just as it was a valuable theme then, it is even more so today -- particularly since noncommissioned officers are performing in roles traditionally reserved for officers.

What's special about this edition is that not only are there contributions from NCOs, but there are submissions from officers as well. Two articles in particular, from the Army's Chief of Staff, Gen. Eric K. Shinseki, and the Director of the Army National Guard, Lt. Gen. Roger C. Schultz, reflect on the valuable mentoring each received as young green second lieutenants and how neither general has ever forgotten the lessons of their NCOs.

This edition's interview features the Army's 18th Secretary of the Army, Thomas E. White. White, a retired brigadier general and former "cavalry trooper," took time out of his hectic schedule with Managing Editor Phil Tegtmeier to reflect on the importance of the Officer/NCO Relationship.

Digging back into the *NCO Journal's* archives, we've reprinted one of our most popular articles in the magazine's history - *"My LT & Me"* by Command Sgt. Maj. John Woodyard. Numerous requests have come to my desk for copies of the edition featuring his article, and I know with its reprint today's officers and NCOs will benefit from Woodyard's words.

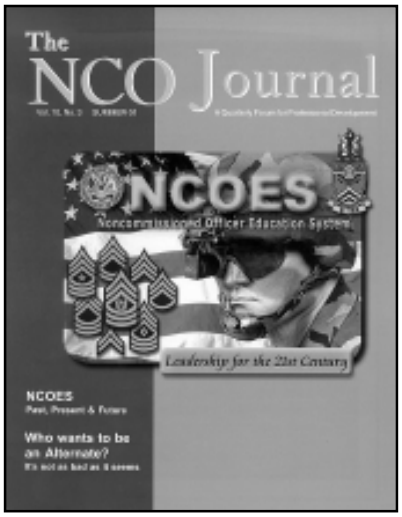
Also in this edition we celebrate the 35th Anniversary of the Office of the Sergeant Major of the Army. Twelve men have sat in the position, and today the position is stronger than ever. As the enlisted advisor to the Chief of Staff of the Army, the SMA's role is to ensure that the concerns of enlisted soldiers are being addressed to the Army's senior leadership. Thirty-five years later, the role hasn't changed and soldiers are benefitting from the Office of the SMA.

Finally, we, the NCO Corps, can celebrate one year of *The NCO Journal's* return back to print. As I stated in the first edition, the success of the *Journal* heavily depends on the NCOs who submit articles and photos for use in the magazine.

On the last page, the new themes and deadlines for submission for next year's editions of the *NCO Journal* are available for you. Let's get those pens to pads and continue to support the *Journal* and thank you for your total support of the publication.

-The Editor-in-Chief

Letters



CONCERNED NCO

I am extremely glad to see the *Journal* back on the street. I am concerned however about the message I see coming from the readers. They are quick to point out the mistakes on the cover, but are they as quick to correct deficiencies in their own units? I hope so, but from what I have seen lately, the answer is "no."

Since the Army adopted the black beret, I have seen and heard nothing but horror stories about the way this "new" headgear is being worn. Fixing the problem is an NCO's basic job. We need to get busy.

NCOs have always been the standard-bearers of the Army, but in the last few years we have been nothing more than mouthpieces trying to get soldiers to adhere to and believe in misguided policies from higher.

Have we forgotten our mission? To fight and win the nation's wars is the first part of that mission statement. Everything else should be secondary.

Looking 18 years in uniform in the face, the one lesson that has always struck me is that soldiers want and expect great, hard, exciting and scary training. From the private in the Ranger regiment to the freshman cadet in ROTC, they all expect the same thing.

We are kidding ourselves if we think we can have a future if we don't provide that training.

MSG Mark Christian
Operations Sergeant
6th Ranger Training Bn.
Eglin AFB, Fla.

JOURNAL SUGGESTION

The *NCO Journal* is an excellent publication. Since NCOs are more likely to pick up your magazine than a post newspaper, you should run a few articles pertaining to retirement.

Eventually, career NCOs will need retirement information, and instead of waiting until 12 months prior to retirement date they choose, they should receive this important information at a time in their career when they should start planning for retirement.

Every Army installation has a Retirement Services Office. Maybe if your magazine suggested it, the NCOs may take time to contact their RSO, attend a preretirement orientation and become better educated in what benefits they will have upon retirement.

Kathy Snyder
Retirement Services Officer
Fort Lee, Va.

CHANGE NCO CHARGE

I recently read the *NCO Journal* (summer edition). On the inside of the back cover was the NCO Charge. I started to read with pride as I do anything dealing with the NCO Corps. However, as I got closer to the bottom I became disappointed.

It reads, "Should I observe errors or actions detrimental to the service, committed by any subordinate, I will have the moral courage to take immediate corrective actions. This I recognize as my greatest obligation as a Noncommissioned Officer."

I personally do not agree with a portion of the above statement. What I recognize as my greatest obligation as an NCO is to have the moral courage to correct errors or actions detrimental to the service, committed by ***any*** soldier/person, not just subordinates.

Please tell me this was just a misprint, because I would hate to think that I should only correct subordinates.

The NCO Creed reads, "I will not compromise my integrity, nor my moral courage." The creed deals with seniors, peers and subordinates alike.

Is the NCO Charge changing the creed? It does not take moral courage to correct subordinates; it takes moral courage to correct superiors. As an NCO, I can definitely uphold the charge if it agrees with the creed.

MSG Dennis R. Neal
Fort Lee, Va.

Editor's Note - The NCO Journal welcomes comments from our readers. Letters to the editor must be signed and include the writer's full name and rank, unit, post/city and state (or city and country) and mailing address. Letters should be brief and are subject to editing.

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By 1SG Dwayne Young & 1st Lt. Jared Reid

The officer/NCO relationship

Leadership is the cornerstone of a distinguished organization's success. U.S. Army officers and noncommissioned officers appreciate the significance of great leadership, and have put into Field Manual (FM) 22-100, *Army Leadership*, the key ingredients to develop soldiers into successful leaders and hone their own leadership skills. Although FM 22-100 explains, "no definitive lines separate officer [and NCO] responsibilities," there are responsibilities within the team that are definitive.

Excerpts from FM 22-100 identify the distinct roles and responsibilities of the officer and NCO that do exist

Commissioned officers command, establish policy and manage Army resources. They are normally generalists who assume progressively broader responsibilities over the course of a career.

NCOs, the backbone of the Army, train, lead and take care of enlisted soldiers. They receive their authority from their oaths of office, law, rank structure, traditions, and regulations.

While commissioned officers command, establish policy and manage resources, NCOs conduct the Army's daily business.

An officer's perspective: As an officer I am the final decision-maker, although I require the counsel and advice of my NCOs to make informative decisions, especially from my first sergeant. We depend on one another to make the right decisions for the unit.

Once my first sergeant and I have discussed an issue, I make the decision and take responsibility for all actions that are based on that decision.

I receive the respect of my NCOs when my judgement is sound, even if I don't follow the advice of my first sergeant or NCOs. Despite that, the first sergeant will ensure that our NCOs carry out actions based on my decision.

My NCOs understand that I take every consideration in mind before I make my decisions, and they will support me because they too want to accomplish the unit's mission.

Additionally, as an officer my role is to look for the safest and most efficient use of my resources to accomplish the mission.

I am not concerned so much with the personal interests of any given individual within my unit, but I am concerned with the overall welfare of all of the soldiers in my command.

The relationship between an officer and a NCO at all levels of the Army is the same. Officers command, direct and lead from senior, high-ranking positions down to platoon leader level, and they rely on their NCOs at each level for advice and mentorship.

There is an NCO next to every officer who commands, directs or leads, from the Sergeant Major of the Army down to the platoon sergeant.

Those NCOs are advising an officer on how to make policy, direct resource allocations, and plan courses of action to accomplish their unit's mission.

An NCO's perspective: The decisions made by commissioned officers must be carried out within the spirit of accomplishing the mission, and changes made should always be discussed.

As an NCO, my experience will always be a major factor in how to best support the final decision. The commander and I are not "friends." Our relationship is more important than that. It is a bond based on mutual trust and respect – a bond that exists from the moment the guidon is passed to the commander. I do not think you, company commander, will have to earn my respect – respect is automatic.

Time cannot be afforded for respect to be built, because the unit could be called to battle. As a command team, we work issues together and this bond can be strengthened, weakened or broken.

A weakened relationship can be repaired through honest dialogue. But once broken, this bond cannot be restored.

Officers and NCOs alike have authority inherent to their rank and duty position

Authority, as stated in FM 22-100 falls in two categories, command and general authority. Command authority is the legitimate power of leaders to direct subordinates or to take action within the scope of their positions.

Command includes the [lawful] authority and responsibility for effectively using available resources to organize, direct, coordinate, employ and control military forces so that they accomplish assigned missions.

It also includes responsibility for health, welfare, morale and discipline of assigned personnel. [Furthermore], general military authority originates in oaths of office, law, rank structure, traditions and regulations.

This broad-based authority also allows leaders to take appropriate corrective actions whenever a member of any armed service, anywhere, commits an act involving a breach of good order or discipline.

An officer's perspective: In my command, senior NCOs, sergeant first class and above, outnumber the lower-ranking soldiers, staff sergeant and below, three to one.

Many of these senior NCOs have been first sergeants and command sergeants major. Yet, with all of these great NCOs assisting me in my decision-making process, I know that I still maintain "command authority" over my unit.

I understand that I make all the final decisions after I have taken the advice from the NCOs within my command. I understand that I am responsible to ensure the unit accomplishes its mission.

Although, by law, I have command authority, I also understand that this authority is ineffective if I do not allow for dialogue between my NCOs and myself.

When I leave my unit I will still retain my "general authority" to maintain order and discipline in the Army by virtue of my rank, just as any other officer or NCO should do.

I will still request the advice of an NCO before I take action to ensure that good order and discipline in the Army is maintained.

Either way you look at it, when an officer exerts either type of authority, the same relationship between an officer and a NCO should still exist.

An NCO's perspective: Being the first sergeant in a unit of deep tradition, this unit definitely has its unique challenges. Soldier care is no different in this unit than any other, but I will say, having spent 22 years in a headquarters element with five years as a platoon sergeant has been an advantage in handling my daily issues.

Although I don't command the unit, I enforce the Army's regulations, policies, values and traditions that make this unit successful. My authority comes from experience and the rank that has been entrusted to me. I use my authority to improve the unit and to take care of soldiers.

My authority as a NCO is used to guide my commander to make the right command decisions. The following quote pretty much sums up the NCO's role in the unit and his authority.

"A sergeant in the Army, if he's a squad leader or tank commander, is a commander just like an officer, no difference whatever. It's just the smallest tactical element. (Gen. William E. DePuy)"

Communication is another significant factor to a successful officer/NCO team

Officers and NCOs are responsible for communicating with each other to ensure they are representing their unit with the same voice. In order to accomplish the mission, information must go up and down the chain of command to ensure that no aspect of coordination is left out.

FM 22-100 explains … The Army has only one chain of command. Through this chain of command, leaders issue orders and instructions and convey policies.

A healthy chain of command is a two-way communication channel. Its members do more than transmit orders; they carry information from the unit or organization back up to its leader.

They furnish information about how things are developing, notify the leader of problems and provide requests for clarification and help.

An officer's perspective: We have pointed out the distinctive differences in officers' and NCOs' training responsibilities. These differences also translate to their responsibility to communicate with each other.

I must communicate my mission and intent and clarify information that may cause conflicts in carrying out the mission. I carry the information down from my higher headquarters to disseminate at my level. It is my responsibility to ensure that I understand the mission given to me and my commander's intent before I translate it into missions for my subordinates to accomplish.

Once I have disseminated the information given to me, I rely on NCOs to brief me on all matters that would deter me from completing my mission.

NCOs know firsthand if their soldiers are ready to accomplish the mission. If the soldiers cannot, and my NCOs communicate to me that they need resources to accomplish the mission, it is my responsibility to ensure resources are available and obtained.

As the mission progresses I communicate with my NCOs to ensure it is being accomplished as I intended. It is also my responsibility to communicate my progress with my higher headquarters.

An NCO's perspective: A good line of communication is very important. We must look each other in the eyes when passing information, because it could be the difference between saving lives and losing them.

As leaders we have experienced many times the receiving of information, guidance or orders from higher headquarters, and what is thought to be important is passed to subordinates who, in turn pass down the information they feel is important.

By the time the information reaches the soldiers who have to accomplish the task, the only thing he or she gets is "Do it!"

Taking the time to explain *why* can be invaluable. A leader must also be a good listener in communicating effectively to accomplish goals.

The officer/NCO team forms the cornerstone of our Army

When used correctly the officer/NCO team is another form of combat multiplier. A strong, team-oriented relationship enhances any unit's success, as everyone is focused on a common goal. Soldiers respect and support leaders who are focused on the mission and speak as one voice.

Before any policy is established, punishment or reward is rendered or mission is planned, officers must sit down with their NCOs and see their point of view.

If there are any conflicts of interest they must work them out. Of course, there will be times when officers and NCOs don't see eye-to-eye on every decision the officer has to make. Despite that, the bottom line that any officer or NCO should be concerned with is successful mission accomplishment and taking care of their soldiers for the next mission.

1st Lt. Reid and 1st Sgt. Young are the company commander and first sergeant for the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, and have been a command team for nearly a year.

A lieutenant who didn't forget

courtesy photo

During his remarks to the Association of the U.S. Army's Annual Convention held October 16, 2000, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric Shinseki took the time to praise a noncommissioned officer who helped shape his military career - his first platoon sergeant. The following excerpts were taken from the speech. Prior to General Shinseki's remarks, Sergeant Major of the Army Jack L. Tilley and the former Sergeants Major of the Army inducted the Chief of Staff into the NCO Corps.

Thank you very much. That's quite an honor. Sergeant Major of the Army Tilley and former Sergeants Major of the Army, it's a great privilege. I will wear the insignia with great pride, and I will have it with me at all times.

My name is Shinseki, and I'm a soldier. And I say that sincerely. It's not a gimmick; I say it with great pride. In my opinion, "soldier," is the most honored title anywhere in the world today.

...I expect noncommissioned officers to take responsibility for individual crew-level training, everything from common tasks to crew qualifications to small unit tactical proficiency of NCO-led formations.

We all say this is the way it ought to be. But I say it isn't that way unless master gunners and sergeants major are running table VIIIs and they're running rifle qualification ranges.

And we ought to put them in charge of individual crew-

courtesy photo by Ernie Kingcade

EVERLASTING IMPACT: SSG Ernie Kingcade taking a break in Vietnam.

> “That young lieutenant got to meet a sergeant by the name of Ernie Kingcade. When Kingcade saw me, I think he immediately recognized his challenge. But he also understood his fundamental responsibility as a noncommissioned officer. He had a soldier in need of training.”

level training, small-unit tactical proficiency for NCO-led formations. My challenge to the officers is to entrust noncommissioned officers with that responsibility. I can tell you that *we* noncommissioned officers will discharge them.

All soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership. Let’s take that seriously. That means a commitment to developing competent, compassionate, courageous leaders, who can inspire, motivate, develop and lead soldiers, who we then grow in our images.

It starts with drill sergeants. They show us what right looks like. How many of you remember your drill sergeants?

You can ask any of us who soldier and you’ll get the same response. In fact, about a year ago, I had the former sergeants major of the Army in a room. I don’t know if they recall, but I asked the same question. And I got the same response.

There is something that happens between a drill sergeant and a young American that remains with soldiers for the rest of their life.

As one told me, “If I close my eyes, I can see the face, I can hear the voice, and I can almost feel his breath on my ear.”

Something happens. It starts with drill sergeants, and all of us need to carry that relationship over into the first unit assigned. We will give noncommissioned officers and officers sufficient time in their developmental positions - platoon and company - so that they can learn their jobs.

And I also expect the noncommissioned officers to actively help me and assist their commanders in developing their junior officers.

My respect for the Army Noncommissioned Officers Corps began on a naval vessel about 35 years ago. It was there that a brand new lieutenant, who had not even had the opportunity to go to the Basic Officers Course, found himself on board a ship, headed to Vietnam.

That soldier, that young lieutenant, got to meet a sergeant by the name of Ernie Kingcade. When Kingcade saw me, I think he immediately recognized his challenge.

But he also understood his fundamental responsibility as an noncommissioned officer. He had a soldier in need of training.

I hadn't been to the basic course; I was an artillery lieutenant going into a combat zone and would be firing real bullets in two weeks.

On that voyage, as we deployed to the warfight, he patiently taught me my craft as an artillery forward observer.

You see, he had done everything that I would ever do as an artillery forward observer several times over.

He trained this soldier and, as much as any officer has in the 35 years since, Ernie Kingcade grew me into a leader. And he's alive and well, and he lives near Fort Sill, Okla.

I remember the first time we had an inspection in country. When we arrived everything was scattered all over the place.

Sergeant Kingcade got the section ready and asked me to meet him near a tree. He said, "I'll have the formation ready." And so I did.

He said, "Okay, sir, there are three folks I want you to look hard at: Jones, Smith, and Brown. They have some discrepancies I want you to point out." And he explained what those were.

He left, and I came down to the formation a minute later. We exchanged salutes, and I went through and picked out Jones, Smith and Brown.

I turned the unit back over to him and, as I moved out of the area, I could hear Ernie Kingcade, in an elevated voice I could hear him, saying, "I told you that lieutenant's got the eyes of an eagle. Now the next time he comes down here, we're going to be straight."

But just think what Ernie did. He established a standard. He established his standard. He identified those who hadn't met it. He also educated me in what the expectations were so that I could reinforce his standard.

That was a great partnership, NCO and officer, a great partnership that we shared together there, living side by side in the jungles of Vietnam.

NCO mentoring has profound importance to the development of young officers. We talk about mentoring today as though it's an officer-to-officer process.

I can tell you some of the greatest mentoring I had came from noncommissioned officers, and I've just given you the first example of it.

We are the Army. We are the finest Army in the world today. Let's keep it that way. We got here because we have the finest noncommissioned officers.

And we have never satisfied ourselves with being just a little better than the next guy. Every day, insist on being the best and on getting better.

photo by Cindy Wissinger

35 YEARS LATER: From a green lieutenant in Vietnam to the Army Chief of Staff.

Every day train your soldiers and grow them into leaders. Every day strengthen the ties that bind us together as warriors, officer and noncommissioned officer.

I never had a drill sergeant, but I had Ernie Kingcade. My name is Shinseki, and I'm a soldier.

In his speech during his arrival ceremony June 22, 1999, Gen. Shinseki mentions another NCO who made an impact on his career - Sgt. Les Cotton. He had both Kingcade and Cotton at his Chief of Staff, Army arrival ceremony - a clear example of his respect and admiration of the NCO Corps. Both speeches are available on the Chief of Staff, Army's website, available on the Army homepage at www.army.mil.

illustration by Joe Martinez

"My LT and Me"

By CSM John D. Woodyard

(Note: The following article first appeared in the Winter 1993 edition of the NCO Journal. Since that time there have been numerous requests via e-mail, telephone and postage for a repeat print of the article. Also, the NCO Journal staff has received many requests from both officers and NCOs for a personal copy of the edition featuring the article. It's obvious this article has made an impact on many leaders since its first print. Hopefully with the reprinting, the words of CSM Woodyard will still have an measurable effect, just as it did in 1993. -- Editor)

If you've been around the Army for any length of time, you've heard a platoon sergeant speaking of "My LT." The words can be given any number of inflections to convey any number of emotions: pride, respect, exasperation, etc. It's important for that platoon sergeant to remember that the LT's performance reflects not only the platoon leader's abilities but the platoon sergeant's abilities as well. The earliest level of direct NCO/officer relationship is at the platoon level, and it's here that foundations are laid and relationships formed which may last throughout a career. We can sum up the essence of this relationship in four "Cs."

It's essential that the platoon leader and platoon sergeant begin with a *common goal.* If there is any question, the goal is simply good training, mission accomplishment and care of the troops.

Orientation toward this goal begins with genuine, mutual respect – recognition of the training, abilities and aspirations of each leader.

It doesn't include an unhealthy preoccupation with personal rewards, evaluations or what "the boss" is going to think. If either of you is more worried about these things than about the mission and the soldiers, resolve it immediately or get out of the leadership business. Your soldiers will recognize and "tune out" a phony in a very short time.

In order to build *cohesion*, you should be seen together often (but not always). Some important places to spend your time are the motor pool, training, sports, unit social activities and the dining facility. (If you want to get a true idea of how your soldiers eat, check the evening and weekend meals, not weekday lunch.)

Prove to members of your platoon that you care about them as individuals and that you care for them as a team.

You're not supposed to become buddies, but you must work together. Finally, ensure the troops can't get around one of you by going to the other.

Platoon leaders and platoon sergeants must *communicate*. Good communication doesn't happen all by itself; it requires constant, conscious effort. Both sides must work at it; one person can't communicate. One of your earliest sessions will include your NCOER counseling.

At this time, discuss who's responsible for what and ensure that neither can abdicate responsibilities. Set guidelines for how you will deal with routine business and how you will react to anything out of the ordinary.

Talk, talk, talk, and listen, listen, listen. Then add some

more "listen." Both of you should listen to guidance and directions from above; listen to your soldiers and to each other.

Set aside time each day to discuss training, activities and problems. Be sure to include time for brainstorming – sounding out new ideas and improvements.

As platoon sergeant, you must be constantly aware of your role as teacher to your platoon leader. In most cases, you will be older, more experienced and more established as a leader.

Your task is to convey your knowledge and experience to your lieutenant without being condescending or disrespectful. And remember – you're never so knowledgeable that you can't learn something new for yourself.

The next aspect of communicating is so important I almost give it a "C" of its own. Meanwhile, timely *counseling* is absolutely necessary to maintain a motivated, disciplined, smooth-running platoon.

Counseling, to include rewards and punishments, is integral to caring for soldiers. In fact, it's as important as good training and good equipment.

You and your platoon leader will work together to establish realistic, recognizable standards. Then, you must correct soldiers who fall short, recognize those who meet the standards, and reward those who can exceed them.

It's not necessary for you to sit together during the counseling session, but you must counsel and you must communicate the results to each other.

As an NCO your professionalism should present a constant *challenge* to your platoon leader and to the soldiers assigned to you.

Every day you set the example in appearance, physical fitness, dependability and attitudes. If you slip, you give someone else an excuse to slip with you.

When it comes to common tasks, MOS competence, weapons or general military knowledge, you must be the most proficient soldier in the platoon. If you're doing all of this, you will earn the [deep] respect of the young lieutenant. Deep respect does not come with the job; you earn it.

The final "C" I call *cover*. Be careful not to give this one the wrong connotation. Cover does not include covering up breeches of integrity or deliberate wrongdoing.

It does mean that you create an environment in which your lieutenant can make mistakes, learn and grow. You begin creating this environment by demanding proper military courtesy from the platoon members towards their platoon leader.

You must understand and weigh the relative inexperience of young officers in contrast to the amount of responsibility they carry. In addition to the platoon, most lieutenants will have a number of additional responsibilities.

Most young officers need help managing their time. Teach them how to prioritize, plan and delegate. You will know that your leadership team is working well when their time is not eaten up with the routine running of the platoon.

> **'As platoon sergeant, you must be constantly aware of your role as teacher to your platoon leader ... Your task is to convey your knowledge and experience to your lieutenant without being condescending or disrespectful.'**

Everyone makes mistakes. Lieutenants make their share. Your job here is twofold. First, make sure they learn from those mistakes. If a mistake is repeated, provide firm, pointed instruction to keep it from becoming a habitual problem.

The Army has done a superb job in recent years of teaching NCOs to train soldiers. We have placed less emphasis on the vital task of teaching young officers. However, if you're new at this business, help is available.

Your best source is probably your first sergeant or an experienced, trusted platoon sergeant. Also, keep your eyes open for a commander or staff officer who works well with NCOs.

This indicates a good first experience and a chance for you to learn about the relationship from another angle. The 22-series of leadership publications provides another valuable source of information.

As you begin working with your "LT," your first concern will be to provide the very best leadership possible for the platoon.

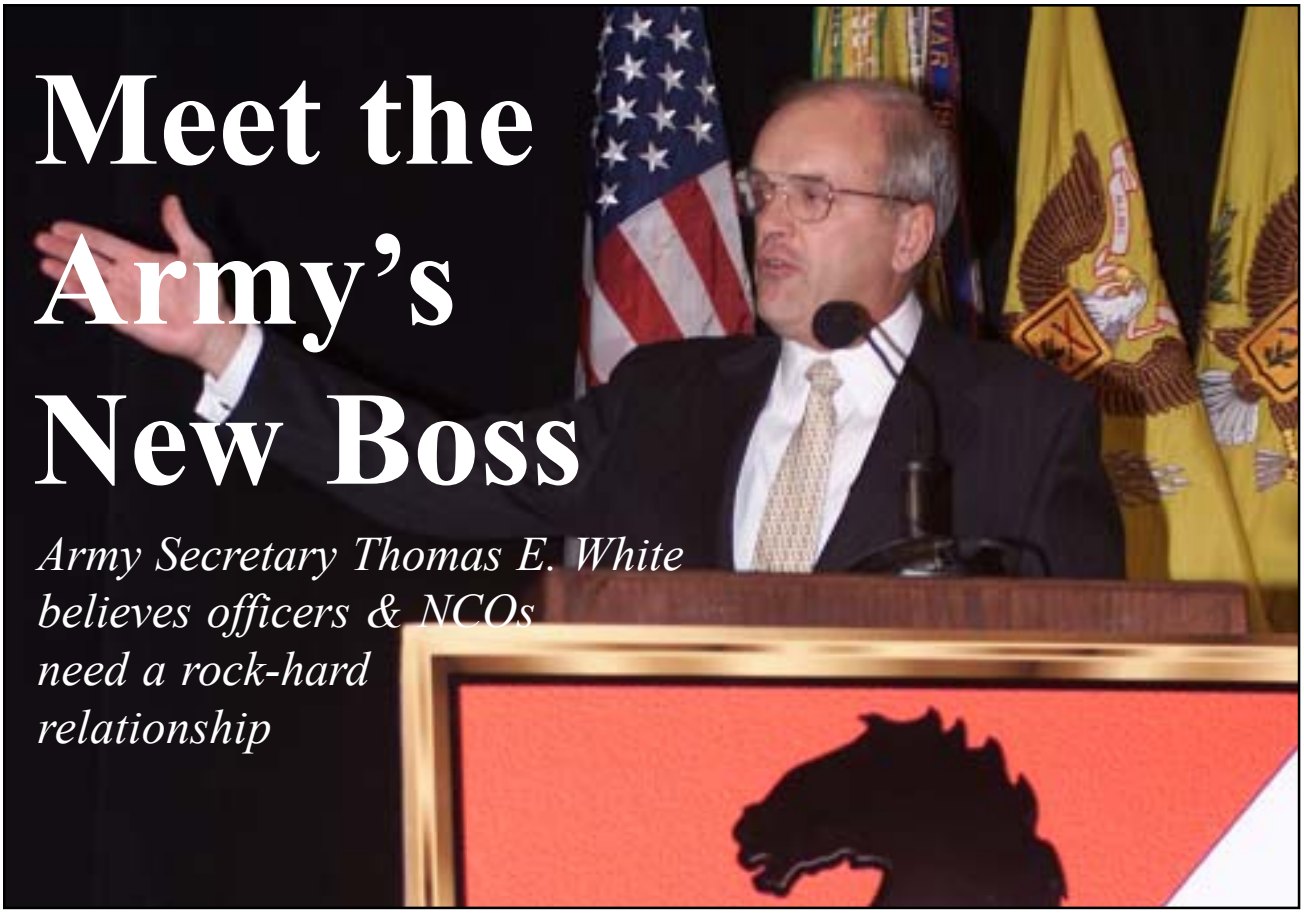
But at the same time, you're training a future commander or staff officer and making an impression that will influence his/her relationship with NCOs for years to come.

You have a big job, platoon sergeant; get to it.

Command Sgt. Maj. Woodyard was the command sergeant major of the 84th Ordnance Bn. at Muenchweiler, Germany at the time when this article appeared in the NCO Journal.

Meet the Army's New Boss

Army Secretary Thomas E. White believes officers & NCOs need a rock-hard relationship



Photos by SGT Carmen Burgess

"The well-being of soldiers, families, and civilians is inextricably linked to the Army's capabilities, readiness, and its preparedness to perform any mission."

—Army Secretary Thomas E. White

"The Officer/NCO relationship is the bedrock of the Army," said Army Secretary Thomas E. White in an interview with the *Journal*'s Managing Editor, Phil Tegtmeier, focusing on this issue's theme. "It's that bedrock that will allow us to transform effectively."

White said that what faces the Army today is nothing new.

"We've done this before. We transformed the Army coming out of Vietnam. We transformed at the turn of the 19th century. And now we have to do it again. What will cause us to succeed again is the total commitment of everyone in the Army. The bedrock that we will build the Transformed Army on is the same one that the current one rests on, and that is the Officer/NCO leadership relationship."

Secretary White, sworn in less than four months ago and already faced with the monumental challenge issued by his bosses to help build a credible military strategy for the 21st Century, says he's found the key to whatever strategy, whatever force structure, that the country's civilian leadership approves for the future. And the key, he says, is a return to the traditional role of officers and NCOs working together as they have in the past.

What exactly that relationship entails has been under discussion in many quarters. To find an answer, Secretary White needed only to look back at his past as an Army officer.

"My belief stems from the way I was raised in the Army and by the way I was trained by people like General Donn Starry and my mentors in the Blackhorse Regiment," White said. "In fact, General Starry, when he was the TRADOC commander, made a tape called "Sergeant's Business," that struck me as clearly articulating what the relationship between the officer and the NCOs and what an officer's business is and what a sergeant's business is.

STILL A PATRIOT: White's roots never left him after retiring from the Army as a brigadier general.

"To boil it all down to a few sentences, officers are in the business of running units; sergeants are in the business of taking care of the soldiers in those units. So, sergeants business is the business of the readiness of the individual soldier in its purest, simplest form. (That means) their training, their well-being, the well-being of their families, the well-being of their readiness, what's bothering them personally—whatever it is. Because it all, ultimately, at the end of the day affects how well they are ready to do their job."

He said that if the Army banks on that relationship, everything is possible. Which is not to say things are all rosy.

"We are at a very important juncture. It's no secret that the post Desert Storm era was a difficult decade. The most difficult part of it was the drawdown. We went from an 18-division Army, and we cut that strength by 40 percent. It was very difficult sustaining a high level of readiness, let alone maintaining a high operational tempo. It put strains and cracks in the basic fiber of the Army the further we've gotten into that. And we've seen that in spades in the surveys we've done.

"People are the centerpiece of our Army—the core of our institutional strength," White said, when asked why he thought people should take precedence over equipment in improving the Army for the future. He said that, in the recent past, "We have maintained readiness by reducing our investment in infrastructure, including programs aimed at promoting well-being, and by asking our soldiers and their families to sacrifice more. While sacrifice is a part of Army life, prolonging this trend will not produce a ready force or allow us to retain quality people."

To determine what soldiers thought about the stresses that cuts in well-being programs had caused, the Army's senior leadership took, as Secretary White described it, an honest step by going out and surveying the Army's well-being, first interviewing the officer corps, and then the NCO Corps.

"I think it is a very healthy sign on the one hand that we are honest enough with ourselves to do the survey and to go out and to go out and honestly solicit input, and to do it on a broad scale. But now the challenge is, 'Okay, you got an "A" on your report card for having gone out and looking and hearing what the problems are, now what are you going to do about it?'"

And what is being done about it? For one thing, the service secretaries are using that information to inform President George W. Bush, his advisors, and members of Congress of the facts of the matter, so that strategic decisions for where the force may go in any restructuring brought about by the Quadrennial Defense Review can be based on fact. Even more to the point, the Army's senior leadership is using that feedback to make a tough call on how to fix things here, now, today.

As a result of those surveys, White said he and other senior leaders are striving to increase pay while eliminating out-of-pocket costs for housing by Fiscal Year 2005, pursuing full funding of health care costs and working to implement TRICARE for Life, stabilizing people and reducing the effects of tempo and turbulence, modernizing single-soldier and family housing, and offering technology-based distance learning opportunities through Army University Access Online.

"Attention to the well-being of our people will help keep quality soldiers and civilians in the years to come," White said.

But, as important as those and other initiatives are, White said the core of the problem of making the Army well lie with the challenge of recreating the culture he said was responsible for the Army's success in Desert Storm.

"Today, the vital bond of trust between leader and led is threatened by a lack of opportunity to exercise initiative and responsibility, micro-mangement, persistence of a zero-defects mentality, and lack of effective, meaningful communication between senior leaders and subordinates," White said after reviewing the results of the survey.

"That, to me, is the most troubling of all of the findings that I have seen," White said. "We can argue about career progression for officers as platoon leaders, and what about Goldwater-Nichols, and command-tour length, and whether we send everyone to Leavenworth (or Bliss for senior NCOs) or just the operators, and all of those mechanical things. When trust does not exist, we tend to focus on self-protection, stifling creativity, aggressiveness, and willingness to take risks—all attributes necessary for success in combat.

"In the environment that I came in with, at troop or squadron or regimental level, I had the benefit of people who gave me a tremendous amount of latitude in how I ran my units, and how I went about things, and stuff I worked on, and how we spent our training time, and all that good stuff.

"Somehow, we have migrated away from that, and I want to get us back to that. Those are the roots of the Army, those are the fundamentals of the Army, and those are the things that make the Army fun. The Army has to be fun. It has to be self-fulfilling. It has to be rewarding. I mean, we don't make a whole lot of money out of this, so it's got to be fun—it's got to be challenging.

"If we don't fix this 'climate' business, so that we earn back the trust and confidence of the junior side of the officer corps by the senior side of the officer corps, then…the rest of it doesn't matter a whole lot."

So how do officers and the NCO Corps help? More importantly for NCOs, how does a platoon or first sergeant contribute to recreating that climate?

"We must set a course for improving trust by bringing institutional beliefs and practices in line," White said. "To that end, we must cultivate decentralization, empower junior authority and responsibility, and develop bold, innovative leaders. We must identify and promote those among us who mentor subordinates and afford them ample opportunity to exercise initiative, make mistakes, and grow while they fulfill their desire to serve. Key to this effort is recognizing and rewarding both unit performance and those leaders who are committed to the individual development and well-being of those soldiers."

This, of course, is the heart of the NCO Corps—to prepare tomorrow's leaders by training their soldiers as well as helping junior officers get a good start on the road to command.

With the support of platoon leaders and company commanders, NCOs have the power and ability to accomplish all those things White said were critical to improving trust.

"What we're talking about is going back to our roots. It isn't like we need a new culture. We have to earn back the old culture. When I left service, I thought we had it pretty good," White said. "We were well-resourced. The OPTEMPO was decent. We spent a lot of time training. We had excellent people, and our equipment was newer than it is today. And because all of us who were in command had been in through the Vietnam period, we were of the view we were never going back there."

And, just to be clear, Secretary White explained what it was that he wasn't going to go back to. He said he had really been part of three armies. The first, the draft Army of Vietnam, eroded and destroyed the fiber of the NCO corps, he said, and explained that the Army paid the price for that. To illustrate, he harkened back to his command time in Vietnam. When he arrived in his command, his platoon sergeant was Sgt. 1st Class Lewis B. Corder, a senior NCO with a wealth of knowledge of what the unit's missions were. By the end of his tour, his platoon sergeant was a "shake-and-bake" buck sergeant with less than two years experience in the Army.

ARMY CULTURE: Officers run units; NCOs are responsible for training.

"He did the best he could, but he had less than a year and a half in the Army. What was there, was there," White said. Then, White said, came the VOLAR, or volunteer Army.

"The senior leadership of the Army was willing to compromise the disciplinary integrity of the Army to be able to say we were all happy, and that people would want to join the Army to part of this kind of loose, undisciplined mob of people where the division commanders went to the coffee house and had coffee-house chats with privates,

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and all that sort of nonsense,” White described.

But then, in the third Army, the one he was most proud of, he said good leaders like Generals DePuy and Starry, re-established the Officer/NCO relationship, and rebuilt the NCO Corps.

“Of all the things we did back then, of the hundreds of things we did well, and even the few things I imagine we screwed up, the single best thing we did was establish the Non-Commissioned Officer Education System. It absolutely was the best.” White said.

He explained that NCOES, with its schools like primary leadership courses, first sergeant and sergeant major courses, gave the NCO Corps back its professionalism.

“That’s why today it takes 20 years to grow someone to be a good battalion command sergeant major. And it’s not something you can repair overnight if you let it get broken. Consequently we, as long as I am around, will never back off of that basic bedrock of professionalism of the NCO Corps.”

As a matter of fact, it is that very professionalism that White is counting on to help get the Army back into focus.

“The great thing back then was that you would walk into a platoon and you had a veteran sergeant, and he knew in great detail the individual tasks associated with the platoon. He also knew the platoon leader’s job very well, because he’d seen a bunch of them come through. So they became your mentor, and it was a wonderful relationship.

“My relationships with my first sergeant when I was a troop commander, with my sergeants major both at squadron and regimental level, were always wonderful, close relationships. We shared a great deal, and they taught me a great deal, and as I got older I taught a few of them a few things, too.

“But that’s the great business. If you’re doing the officer’s business, and the NCO’s doing the sergeant’s business, and you are sharing together and putting those pieces together, it’s a wonderful thing. That is the bedrock of the Army, and it is based on trust and respect.”

To get back there, White said officers need to get back to how commanders and NCOs acted in his day.

"We must not preach decentralization and at the same time punish subordinates for practicing it," White explained. "We are all imperfect people living and working in a profession that strives for perfection. That we sometimes make mistakes is to be expected. Good leaders recognize potential as well as natural talent. They tolerate honest error in pursuit of excellence, and use it to develop subordinates—as the careers of many of our most distinguished soldiers can attest."

White then referred to an adage that says the gem cannot be polished without friction, nor the man perfected without trials.

"Our way of life will certainly provide the frictions and the trials; our role is to use these tools to improve ourselves and the Army," he said.

"I trusted my non-commissioned officers to do their business. Consequently, while I would occasionally spot-check it, I didn't spend my life going through the barracks. If there was a discipline problem in the barracks, it was NCO business to fix that. And I trusted that they would do that. And they did. And on the rare occasions they didn't, I held them accountable. But, I didn't micromanage them. I gave them a lot of freedom on how I expected to see things got done.

"The officer's principal task is to know, and establish, and hold people accountable to meet standards. That's their business. How the standard is met should be (given) as much flexibility as can be passed down to the next lower echelon. This is not a recipe for officers to micromanage NCOs. That will always result in failure, because the NCO will quit on the officer, and the officer will run around in smaller and smaller circles, and the fact of the matter is that you can't get it all done.

"I don't see the Transformation affecting that basic, fundamental relationship between the officer and the NCO, because I think that is a core value of the Army. I think that is so fundamental to what we do that I don't think we intend to transform that," White said. "What we intend to do, as we have always done, is to build upon that as the foundation that allows us to do other things—to inject more mobility in our command, to increase its lethality, to improve its overall combat readiness and so forth.

"Now, will we broaden the span of control relationship between the officer and the NCO?

Maybe we will in order to take advantage of information technology. Might we restructure units so that they are configured in different ways with senior non-commissioned officers accepting broader responsibilities because of the broader span of control? Sure. All that's possible.

"But at the end of the day, people are people, and people need to be led. The leadership equation has an officer piece to it and an NCO piece to it. That's absolutely fundamental. The readiness of the Army twenty or thirty or fifty years from now will still depend heavily on sergeant's business being done to very high professional standards. And that's what makes us unique."

PRAISE FOR NCOs: The Officer/NCO relationship is based on trust and respect.

White closed by reminding everyone involved in the officer/NCO team of what they need to do every day, and the importance of doing it.

"We must seize every opportunity to highlight and strengthen the intangibles that attract people to the Army in the first place: a noble service to our country, the camaraderie and traditions of our units, the excitement of overcoming tough operational challenges together, and the satisfaction of being part of a winning team that cares about them and their families. Together, we can strengthen trust and make the Army a fun place to live and work."

Phil Tegtmeier is the Managing Editor of the NCO Journal and a retired Public Affairs noncommissioned officer. His article on the Secretary of the Army's graduation address to USASMA Class 51 appeared on the Army News Service website May 31, 2001.

COMMAND TEAM

The command team must know each other's strengths and weaknesses, because those are the team's strengths and weaknesses. For the command team to reach a point of tangency, it must use the strengths to its greatest advantage while covering for the other's weaknesses...(CSM Jimmie W. Spencer, letter Sept. 1, 1997)

By 1SG Gerald J. Schleining Jr.

An old sergeant major told me on the day I put on my diamond, "You have a choice to make. You can either get along with your commander and have a good relationship, or you can not get along and drag through your tenure. Either way you are bound to take care of your company, and nothing else matters."

As I began my first tour as a first sergeant I took heed to those words, looking down the road at the next two years asking myself, "How do I want to leave this command?" This began my learning process of the command team and what my role in it was.

My commander at the time was a seasoned commander. He had been in command for a year and a half and was ready to change the direction of the company.

We were in the preparation phase of a Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) rotation, and the company had gone through a major rotation of key leaders.

We had new platoon leaders, underdeveloped noncommissioned officers, and besides a lot of motivated soldiers, the company was ripe for change. The outgoing first sergeant retired and had taken a standoffish approach to the unit in his last year.

Needless to say, I was fit for a challenge that would solidify all that it meant to be a first sergeant. My command sergeant major whispered in my ear as he congratulated me on my promotion that I would earn my diamond in the next six months.

My first priority was to learn what it was that was expected of me as a first sergeant. I think that we all *know* what a first sergeant is supposed to be and what the first sergeant's basic function is in the company, but what are the nuts and bolts?

At battalion staff meetings the "command team" kept being brought up. It was an expectation by our battalion commander that the company commanders and first sergeants operated as one team.

I figured that was logical, but what did it entail? The first step would be to find out who my commander really was; what was his leadership philosophy? What did he expect from his soldiers, his NCOs and his first sergeant?

This would build a foundation that I could work from. In this discussion, we learned about each other's leadership style and came up with a basic understanding of each other.

The second thing that the commander and I began to embark on was goals for the unit. Staying within the parameters of *Battle-Focused Training*, we established short-term and long-term goals.

With JRTC quickly approaching, we kept it in our short-

term window and looked at what we could affect in the time prior to the rotation. JRTC became our intermediate point. It would be the event that we would measure our results from.

The commander outlined his training objectives, and I provided my input on NCO development and individual training.We also discussed discipline and family welfare.

Once we had a grasp of the direction of the company, I still was unclear on the execution of the tentative plan. Whose job was whose?

My questions about "command team" and officer/NCO relationships still had not been answered. I tried to look back at the near past and draw from my experience as a platoon sergeant. The development and training of young lieutenants was very different than working with a seasoned officer.

assign a task or goal to a specific member of the command team.

Ownership of the task fell on the commander, and with that understanding it enabled us to stay within our own lanes.

An agreement that we would stay in our lanes maintained a good working climate and enabled us to move freely from one goal to the next.

During our weekly training meeting we discussed our progress. When help or support was needed it was there on both sides.

By the time our rotation at JRTC was in the memory books, we had managed to complete and maintain 80 percent of our objectives. The key to success was a desire to put the number one thing first and that is the *company*.

In the duties and responsibilities outlined in FM 7-10, the

"While the job of a platoon sergeant is extremely challenging and rewarding, the company level relationships are far more formal and require mature leadership and an understanding of the full scope of responsibilities and duties of that leadership."

While the job of a platoon sergeant is extremely challenging and rewarding, the company level relationships are far more formal and require mature leadership and an understanding of the full scope of responsibilities and duties of that leadership.

A quick study of doctrine [FM 7-10] led me to my job description. This provided an outline of my duties and responsibilities as a first sergeant of a rifle company.

I then looked at the commander's job description, to have a better understanding of what he would be required to accomplish and to put myself in a position, as his advisor to aid him.

This was one of the most important tools I found. It gave a clear and concise outline of our duties.

The command team was starting to make sense. Looking at our job descriptions the two jobs [assisted by the XO] complement each other in many cases, and at times the lines blurred and came together.

It was evident that the ultimate goal of the command team was to take care of the company. Having a clear understanding of the goals and objectives of the unit helped in knowing which element would have a greater impact on the outcome.

We agreed that in order to better operate in a command team, he would task-organize the goals of the unit and

underlying assumption is that the number one task of the command is to take care of the company. This includes the training of the soldiers and their welfare. It means that tactically, logistically and administratively the company must be sound.

In order to accomplish this the command team must effectively work together. Personal feelings must be put aside or dealt with up front, and objectives must be clearly defined and task-organized within the command team.

Staying in your lanes is a critical piece also. It provides trust and confidence in both leaders and allows for freedom in action. It never goes without the mutual support of the team.

It is not *your* Company – we only borrow it for a time. We should all look forward to the possible end of our tours as first sergeants and ask, "How will I leave this command?"

Hopefully, with a well-developed plan and the execution of a working command team grounded in the understanding that the unit comes first, the company will be much better than when you borrowed it.

Schleining is the first sergeant for Company C, 1-162 Inf., 41st Separate Infantry Bde., 7th Inf. Div.(Light) located at Fort Lewis, Wash.

AN OFFICER'S LESSON LEARNED

THE VALUE OF NCOs

Listening to NCOs has never been a problem for Lt. Gen. Roger C. Shultz, director of the Army National Guard. He's been doing just that for 32 years, and in the following article he reflects on how NCOs have adopted, mentored and developed him as an officer.

Story & photo by Renee McElveen

Creating effective leadership among commissioned officers and noncommissioned officers requires two-way traffic according to Lt. Gen. Roger C. Schultz, Director of the Army National Guard. Schultz learned this valuable lesson very early in his career.

"I had just arrived in Vietnam and had assumed my duties as a rifle platoon leader," he recalled. "The only way you could survive those early days in country was with NCOs who would go out of their way to help you."

It was August of 1969, and Schultz was a first lieutenant with the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment of the 25th Infantry Division.

"There was no doubt in my mind after the first platoon meeting that four squad leaders were going to look after me, just like they were the rest of the platoon," he said.

Schultz decided he needed to be smart enough to listen to his NCOs, and did just that. He survived his tour of duty in Vietnam and returned to Iowa to continue serving with the Iowa Army National Guard.

The value of listening to seasoned NCOs was an extremely powerful lesson that he has never forgotten.

Thirty-two years later, Schultz is a newly promoted lieutenant general charged with guiding the development and implementation of all programs and policies affecting the ARNG and its more than 350,000 citizen-soldiers. He says he continues to listen and learn from his NCOs every day.

"You have to be humble," he said. "No one knows everything."

Schultz said NCOs have had a significant impact on his military career from the very beginning. In fact, it was an NCO who visited his high school in LeMars, Iowa, who later enlisted him into the Iowa Army National Guard as a

private in 1963.

While serving in his first unit, another NCO insisted that Schultz apply for Officer Candidate School (OCS).

"I resisted for over a year," he recounts. Schultz did not want anything to do with being an officer and was perfectly content serving his time as an enlisted soldier.

Schultz finally relented and successfully completed OCS, receiving his commission as an infantry officer in 1967.

SPECIAL BOND: Listening to NCOs is a valuable lesson Schultz, right, has never forgotten.

"NCOs adopted me and mentored me from the day I enlisted," he said. "They coached me when I needed help."

Although busy with their own leadership duties, NCOs serving with Schultz always had time to listen.

His NCOs helped him develop as a leader by demonstrating various ways to accomplish the mission, and instilling in him the importance of setting the example for soldiers both on and off duty.

Establishing a good working relationship among officers and NCOs within a unit is critical to the success of that unit, according to Schultz.

"There is no other option," he said. "In fact, this is the standard. Trust and confidence in the ranks is what leadership is all about."

Another gauge by which to measure the success of a unit is to examine whether or not the leaders – both officers and NCOs — are working together to focus on common goals, Schultz said.

He said leaders must care for their soldiers first by training them to do their jobs properly, while also looking after their soldiers' interests, which includes their families.

The relationship between officers and NCOs should be professional and grounded with respect for one another, Schultz said, noting that trust "can only be earned, not directed, ordered or mandated."

When asked to name the one NCO who stands out as having been a positive influence on his career, Schultz points to his late father-in-law, retired Sgt. Maj. Joe Kaiser.

Kaiser joined the Army in 1935, serving with Gen. George S. Patton in the 3rd Army and later deploying to Korea with the 7th Infantry Division.

A veteran of World War II and the Korean War, Kaiser "accomplished things with tanks many said were impossible, in unbelievable conditions," Schultz explained.

"He never once complained to me about his experience, and you know he had some tough ones," Schultz said. "He felt fortunate to serve our nation."

The sergeant major once offered his son-in-law the following piece of advice: if you want to be successful, listen to your NCOs. Schultz offers the same advice to newly commissioned officers today: you can and you must want to learn from your NCOs.

"Lieutenants alone cannot accomplish the mission," he said. "Not now, not ever, so start early in rallying the team to the mission."

As the backbone of the Army, NCOs are also the heart and soul of the organization, he noted.

"There is no way we can be successful without them," Schultz said.

Renee McElveen is the staff writer for the Director's Staff Group, Army National Guard. She is a former Air Defense Artillery (PATRIOT) and Adjutant General Corps officer with seven years of Active Duty service.

Office of the Sergeant Major of the Army

By CSM Dan Elder

FOR TODAY'S SOLDIERS, THE POSITION OF SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY IS AS NATURAL AS A SQUAD LEADER. But just 35 short years ago it was not so. It was on the Fourth of July 1966 that the Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Harold K. Johnson approved the establishment of the position of Sergeant Major of the Army, and a week later on a reviewing stand near the Pentagon Mall Entrance the first enlisted man, Sergeant Major William O. Wooldridge, was sworn in as the first Sergeant Major of the Army.

The sergeant major was a part of the fledgling Continental Army of 1775 and served at the head of the noncommissioned officers of the regiment.

In Baron von Steuben's instructions (the *Blue Book*) he noted that the sergeant major should be well-acquainted with management, discipline of the regiment and of keeping rosters and forming details.

Though their numbers and placement would vary over the years, it took a cost-reduction measure by Congress in June 1920 to eliminate the grade of sergeant major when enlisted members were grouped into seven pay grades (E-1 through E7).

Though the position of sergeant major would informally be given to a senior master sergeant (E-7), it would not be until the *Military Pay Bill of 1958* that created the "supergrades" that the grade of sergeant major was restored. In April 1959, the first NCOs were promoted into the newly created rank.

In 1964 and again in 1965, the U.S. Army Pacific Command representative at the annual Personnel Sergeants Major conference recommended establishing a Sergeant Major of the Army position and the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel initiated a study.

In 1957 the Marines had established a Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps position, and the enlisted assistant to the Chief of Staff of the Army, Sgt. Maj. George Loikow, had recommended to Johnson that the Army should follow suit.

Johnson believed that "If we were going to talk about the noncommissioned officers being the backbone of the Army, there ought to be established a position that this was in fact the case."

In May of 1966 Johnson notified the field commanders of the major commands that he intended to appoint a Sergeant Major of the Army and solicited their nominations asking that it be a personal recommendation and should not be considered a contest or retirement-type assignment.

Johnson listed seven duties and functions he expected the sergeant major to perform, including service as a personal advisor and assistant to the chief of staff on those matters pertaining to enlisted men.

Johnson whittled the 4,700 candidates down to 21 nominees and then selected the only one then serving in Vietnam, the sergeant major of the 1st Infantry Division, William O. Wooldridge.

Wooldridge came to Johnson's attention when he represented his division in an adoption ceremony in Birmingham, Ala., and was highly regarded by military superiors, contemporaries and subordinates — and by the civilians he had come in contact with.

A highly-decorated veteran of World War II and Vietnam, Wooldridge had served the majority of his career as an infantryman, with 16 years spent overseas. He was quickly

dispatched to the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

Johnson signed General Orders #29 officially establishing the position of Sergeant Major of the Army on July 4, 1966, with a tenure to correspond with the Chief of Staff of the Army's.

Wooldridge soon arrived from Vietnam, still in his fatigue uniform, and reported to Gen. Johnson, who announced he was to swear Wooldridge in as the first Sergeant Major of the Army on the 11th of July. Wooldridge was to lay low until the official announcement and was fitted for a proper dress uniform.

courtesy photo

HISTORIC DAY: The first Sergeant Major of the Army William O. Wooldridge receiving his oath from Gen. Harold K. Johnson.

At 11a.m. on Monday, the Secretary of the Army, Chief of Staff, and other distinguished guests participated along with the ceremonial troops from the 3rd Infantry (Old Guard) in the official swearing-in ceremony of the first Sergeant Major of the Army. Gen. Johnson administered the oath to Wooldridge on the Pentagon Mall.

This unprecedented position in U.S. Army history was given a full-court press. Special position quarters on Fort Myer, Va. were designated and refurbished for the senior enlisted man, along with an office in the Pentagon's "E Ring," which were to set an example that all Army personnel could aim for, the prestige of the position of the senior enlisted soldier of the Army.

Since no special rank insignia had yet been developed, Mrs. Wooldridge and Johnson affixed to the sergeant major's uniform a specially designed collar insignia.

This new badge of the office, improvised by Gen. Johnson's special projects officer, Col. Jasper J. Wilson, and approved on July 4, 1966, was devised by attaching the shield (minus the eagle) of the Aide to the Chief of Staff to a standard enlisted brass disk.

The Sergeant Major of the Army was to wear a pair of these insignia in place of the branch and U.S. insignia normally worn by enlisted men. It would not be until the fall of 1978 that the Army would adopt a distinctive insignia of rank for the office.

Special Orders # 142 appointed Wooldridge as the Sergeant Major of the Army with a date of rank of July 11, 1966, directing him to serve as principal enlisted assistant to the Chief of Staff, Army.

In his brief instructions, Johnson included on a 3 x 5 card that he presented to Wooldridge that he was to advise the Chief of Staff on "all matters pertaining primarily to enlisted personnel, including … morale, welfare, training, clothing, insignia, equipment, pay and allowances, customs and courtesies of the service, enlistment and reenlistment, discipline and promotion policies."

Wooldridge kept the folded card in his wallet, the only written instructions he had during his time in office. In a handwritten note to Wooldridge later Johnson stated "You have shouldered a large burden, and I am most appreciative of the way you have done it."

Since that July day 35 years ago, 11other of the most qualified senior noncommissioned officers have held the top position within our Army.

Since the establishment of the position of Sergeant Major of the Army, they have been working to refine and bring back professionalism to the NCO Corps, and refining the focus of the Office of the Sergeant Major of the Army.

Today's soldier can clearly identify with the top enlisted soldier serving at the head of the noncommissioned officer support channel and we owe a debt of gratitude to General Johnson and the men who have made it possible … the Sergeants Major of the Army.

CSM Elder is a devout student of Army history. He has contributed articles to the NCO Journal for several years. To learn more about the SMAs, read The Sergeants Major of the Army by Mark Gillepsie, Glen Hawkins, Michael Kelly and Preston Pierce. The book is available from the Center of Military History, Pub. 70-63, 1995, 180 pages.

Pass the word: Put pen to pad

By SSG Donald Sparks

As an Army journalist, writing and photography are two parts of my craft that I'm particularly proud of. Communication is a part of my daily duties each day I wear the uniform, whether I'm putting out information at formation or designing and laying out the *NCO Journal*. Every NCO has communicative skills and it is those skills that are in need to maintain the quality and success of this magazine. As I mentioned in the first issue earlier this year, this is *your* publication, so the success of the *Journal* depends solely on the NCO Corps.

In one of my favorite quotes, President Abraham Lincoln states, "Writing, the art of communicating thoughts to the mind through the eye, is the greatest invention of the world. [It enables] us to converse ... at all distances of time and space."

For nearly one year (after coming back into print) this magazine has done just that. Through the pens and pads of NCOs, the *NCO Journal* has once again made an impact on the Corps. We've been able to express our viewpoints on themes ranging from training, the Noncommissioned Officer Education System and the officer/NCO relationship.

We have been able to converse and, as it states in the *Journal's* mission statement, "To provide a forum for the open exchange of ideas and information, to support training, education and the development of the NCO Corps."

To keep the momentum going, the themes for next fiscal year are as follows: **Winter** – Counseling/Mentorship; **Spring** – Integrating the Active Component/Reserve Component; **Summer** – Promotions; **Fall** – NCO Ethics.

Deadlines for article and photo submissions are: Winter - Oct. 15, 2001; Spring - Jan. 10, 2002; Summer - April 15, 2002; Fall - July 15, 2002.

Again, no journalism or writing experience is necessary. All NCOs, regardless of status in active or Reserve Component, can submit articles to the magazine.

As former Sergeant Major of the Army Julius Gates stated in the first edition of the *Journal*, "We must energize ourselves to writing and submitting recommended topics for publication.

"Within our corps of noncommissioned officers, we have talented soldiers who can provide written information for the benefit of our total Army.

"Again, we must tap this talent by energizing ourselves and encouraging our fellow noncommissioned officers to put pen to paper."

That was 10 years ago. Let's get energized, let's pass the word from the MACOM sergeant major to the squad leader to keep the momentum going and support the only magazine in the Army devoted to the NCO Corps.

Most importantly, communicate with us to let us know what you think we can do better. The *Journal* staff values your input, and we want to put out the best quality product for you. After all, this is *your* magazine.

Thank you for your total support, and let's put pen to pad.

Staff Sgt. Sparks is the Editor-in-Chief of the NCO Journal magazine. He has been the editor of several Army newspapers prior to arriving at USASMA.