

## The Sergeant is the Army ~*General Dwight D. Eisenhower*

The Officer and the NCO, the Captain and the Sergeant, the Old Man and the Gunny. Caesar and his Principes, Patton and his Sergeant Majors, Nimitz and his Chiefs. Throughout man's history, the militaries have been "led" by Officers, high born, educated, noble of cause and bearing. But these same militaries have been "run" by the Non-Coms. Non-Commissioned Officers, warriors promoted from the ranks to lead, guide, train, inspire, push, intimidate and keep their charges alive.

It is the contention of this paper that the Non-Commissioned Officers are of great value to the Commissioned Officer in the fulfillment of both of their duties. We will show this through analysis and anecdotal evidence in three different broad areas. First, as an experienced source of Institutional Memory. Second, as a teacher, both to the new enlisted and to the new officer. Finally, as a liaison between the upper echelons and officers and the troops.

Through all of these areas we will show the value that the NCO holds to the Commissioned Officer, but not only their but to the Corps as a whole, Starfleet as a whole, and the Federation itself owes much to the value the NCO Corps gives with its service and sacrifice.

### **Institutional Memory**

In any military service, there are two sources of Institutional Memory, the Service Academy which turns high school or college graduates into newly commissioned officers, or the NCO Corps which has historically been tasked with turning raw recruits into soldiers/sailors/marines.

Why is it important that there are two versions of the Institutional Memory? Mostly because of perspective, Officers by the nature of their position have a different perspective on what is happening, and what happened. A Colonel will look at the whole battlefield, and how a column of troops here will affect an enemy advance there, and how 20 million liters of fuel will allow the counterattack to continue. Meanwhile the Sergeant Major will look at the same battlefield and see specifics, troop exhaustion, bad food, trench foot. Together the two will win the war, but the memory of what the individual grunt experienced will only be remembered by the NCO's.

As implied above Commissioned Officers have a different agenda than their NCO counterparts. Commissioned Officers are striving to carry out the policies of the National Executive (Federation Council), while the NCO's are striving to keep their men alive, healthy, and combat capable. Again the broad versus the specific. Often a General has had to be reminded by his Command NCO, to see the trees (marines) in the forest (the battles).

And that simple is the difference in their roles. Officers do care about their men, and know that it is those men (and women) who are the most important in their armory, but it is their role to fight the battle first. Meanwhile the sergeants do care about the battle, and whether it is won or lost, but their rule is first the men. This then is the difference in the roles played by the two in developing Institutional Memory for the military service.

From the last war to the next one, the Non-Commissioned Officers also supply another much needed different perspective from the Officer Corps. The last war's Lieutenants will be the next war's Colonels. And the lessons they learned will have changed so much over the years, and the responsibilities they now hold make their old experiences nearly irrelevant. However the Sergeant of yesterday is the Gunney or SarMajor of today, and his or her lessons learned can still be applied to their roles today. The small unit tactics practiced at the fire team and squad levels can and are reinforced continuously by the senior NCOs as they rise up in the ranks and are taught down the chain until they hit the current unit NCOs.

The techniques of small unit command are passed along similarly by the NCO Corps, as well as using special NCO Courses at the various service training commands. It has become a practice first started by the US Marine Corps, copied by the US Navy, and later the US Army to encourage Officers to attend these "NCO" only courses on an audit basis so that they can learn what their senior officer know, and what can be delegated to them.

Finally, the NCO Corps can pass on first hand knowledge of the enemy contact, at the level it can best be used. Senior Sergeants can tell junior ones, what it is like to face the Klingons, the Cardassians, the Borg and the Jem Hadar in an intimate and deadly detail.

Finally the NCO Corps is in regards Institutional Memory, the core of the "Band of Brothers" concept. The Loyalty that these men and women show each other goes beyond mere comraderie or friendship, but approaches that of fraternal brotherhood. NCOs give such service to their subordinates, that can never be duplicated outside of their traditions. Sergeants who are only a few years older than their charges, have through the traditions and conditioning passed on by centuries of experience become the "Old Man" of the unit, and are convinced that their primary mission is to bring their charges home alive.

This creates a two-way loyalty between the Privates and the NCOs that goes far beyond Boot Camp conditioning, Patriotism or any other outside factors. Often this is described as Brotherly Love or 'Agape', the love for another that carries no reward other than its own existence. This goes far in explaining the selfless act of heroism, that the NCOs and their charges perform for each other, that any sane man would run from, e.g. throwing oneself on a grenade, or a barbed wire fence, or carrying dangerous satchel charges forward through the lines. It is also as simply shown, by various members of the units carrying loads for each other, even when they don't have to, but one member of the unit, the brotherhood, needs some help.

## **The NCO as a teacher**

The second major area that the NCO Corps is a great advantage to the Officer Corps is as a teacher. They can be teachers of junior officer. Teachers of junior enlisted personnel, and teachers of each other.

NCOs are the best teachers of all for the Cadet, here the young man or woman has left home, and is being introduced to the realities of military life in a rapid-fire manner. NCOs are best trained to break the civility of their backgrounds, to more exactly break down the Cadet themselves. Once this is done, they can be rebuilt as soldiers, Marines, or sailors. The Cadet will always remember who it was that did this to and for them, and know later as officers, that they have passed even a small part through the baptism that all enlisted and officer alike go through.

This instruction does not end at commissioning, every new Butterbar (2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. or Ensign), so named because of the historical gold bar they wore on their uniforms is assigned a small unit of between 20-60 personnel. Also assigned to them is the unit NCO, either a Senior Sergeant or Chief Petty Officer. It is this NCO's responsibility to help transition the new officer from cadet to manager of people, and then to being a leader of warriors. Often the NCO must restrain the youthful eagerness and ergo stupidity of the Butterbar, to keep the troops from getting killed, or the mission from failing.

As the officer arises to the ranks of 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. and Captain, this instruction decreases and becomes one of cooperation and respect, while at the same time the NCO continues to remind the officer to remain grounded, and also serves to remind him/her that not so long ago, they were the wet behind the ears Butterbar themselves.

Likewise the NCO acts as a teacher, mentor, and instructor for the Junior Enlisted Personnel. From the rigors of Boot Camp through their early years as Privates, PFCs, Lance Corporals, and Corporals (Recruits, Apprentices, Crewman and Petty Officer Third Class) the wise old NCO (often only two to five years senior) pass on knowledge as diverse on how to take care of one's feet on the march, to how to fieldstrip a weapon during sensory deprivation periods. It is real universe experience that is often much more valuable and almost always more applicable than any book training they can receive.

Finally the last group the NCO teaches, is their peers.

Within the combat unit, the NCO passes on his specific knowledge and experiences unique to him, which in any small way can make his peers lives easier, their combat safer, their relationships up and down the chain of command smoother. Within their branch the NCO brings experiences from her experiences outside of the branch, from the interaction created from cross-branch assignments and combined arms operations. And throughout the entirety of the service, the camaraderie and esprit de corps of that NCO Corps is shared and magnified as they relate to each other over a bottle beer, a cup of coffee, or any of the myriad of ways people interact.

## **The NCO as Liaison**

The NCO acts as liaison in three areas: transmission of Orders, Training, and Combat.

The officer assigned to troops cannot be in all places at all times, nor can they monitor every soldier in their command. They can however utilize the NCO Chain of Command, to get the maximum amount of Command, Control and Communication with the minimum amount of distraction. For example in a Marine Corps Platoon, there is one Officer and around thirty-nine enlisted personnel. The Platoon Leader acting in conjunction with the Platoon Sergeant will speak to his three Squad Leaders only. And will communicate up the chain to the Company Commander, and peer to peer with two or three other platoon leaders. This is at most ten persons he has to interact with shared with the Platoon Sergeant. The squad leaders will likewise talk up the chain to the Platoon Leader, across the chain to the other two squad leaders, and down the chain to three Fire Team Leaders, or six personal interactions. The Fire Team leaders will talk up to the squad leader, across to the other two fire team leaders, and down the chain to his three fire team members, or again six personal interactions. The orders do not have to be repeated by the Platoon Leader (the officer) 39 times, and the entire NCO structure understands exactly what the Platoon Leader wants and can provide feedback quickly and efficiently.

Training presents another avenue for the NCO liaison duties. Again, officers cannot be present in sufficient quantity to ensure that the initial training of recruits and cadets is as comprehensive and thorough as necessary. Nor can a large cadre of officers be set aside for the continuing education of the standing forces that will keep it at the cutting edge of both technology and techniques of warfare. Senior NCOs fill this role superbly having both the experience and maturity required to pass on the lessons and skills to tomorrow's warriors. In effect one mid level officer can supervise 9 to 18 NCO "instructors" (DIs, CCs, and other titles) and thus they can act as liaison and as manpower multiplier in the Recruiting Depots and Advanced Schools throughout the National Defense System. For example at the US Navy Enlisted Recruit Training Centers in San Diego, CA and Great Lakes, IL, a recruit Battalion will have a Naval Lieutenant or Lt. Commander supervising eighteen Company Commanders of E-5 to E-7 grade, with a support team of four other Enlisted personnel. These will train NINE Recruit Companies of 80 Recruits each. Thus multiplying the Officer's normal command area of responsibility of 40-80 subordinates to upwards of 720 new recruits.

As with the transmission of orders during non-combat situations, the NCO Corps is just as vital as a liaison between the Officer and the enlisted troops during combat situations, if not more so. The fog of war, the confusion caused by noise, destruction, death itself, will sunder a unit apart if they are not trained for the eventualities of disruption and division. The NCOs are vital to this process of keeping the mission in mind, while moving the troops to the eventual goal AND keeping them alive.

## **Closing**

As we have shown the NCO Corps is VITALLY important to the success and survival of the Officer Corps. Any who think that technology will replace the need for Sergeants and Chiefs to help manage, train, liaise and most importantly LEAD the warriors of today the future is not only short sighted but blind. Blind to the past, blind to the present and blind to the future. From the Principeps and Hectarches of Ancient Rome, to the Gunneys and Chiefs of today, the enlisted men and women who protect their nations will always need the rough and gruff father figure of the NCO.

Learn from those who have gone before; teach those who come after.  
The Roman Empire did not create a prosperous empire and come to be feared by having meetings and doing paperwork; they did this by killing all who opposed them ~*Unknown*

From: Scott A. Akers [chunone@nwlinc.com]  
Sent: Sunday, November 10, 2002 7:45 PM  
To: Scott Anthony Akers  
Subject: NCO-30 Thesis Topic

The value of the NCO to the Commissioned Officer of the SFMC

#### Opening

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    - 1. From the Officers
    - 2. To the Troops
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#### Closing

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