

Greeting: My name is SGM Willard V. Eley Jr. and I will be giving a brief on the History of the NCO' in the American Army during the period of 1775-1865.

This is an information briefing. It is unclassified.

The purpose of this brief is to familiarize you with challenges NCO's during that time period.

References:

**BOOK, 1 AUTHORS**

Charles Jacobs. The Beginning of the Army New York, New York 1979.

**BOOK, 2 AUTHORS**

William Gaenoe. History of the United States Army New York, New York 1984.\_

**BOOK, 3 AUTHOR**

L.R. Arms and Patricia Rhodes. A Short History of the NCO Fort Leavenworth, Kansas,

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**BOOK, 4 AUTHOR**

Leon I. Brown, Robert S. Phillips and Norma H. Dickey. Evolution of Soldiers Guthrie,

Kentucky 1994.

After reading this material the I found the material very informing and that there is a lot more material that pertains to the history of NCO's during this time period.

## **HISTORY OF THE NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER**

The history of the United States Army and the Non-commissioned Officer Corps began in 1775. Americans took a blend of the French, British and Persian armies and turned it into a unique American institution and created the rank of Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO). Over the years, the political system was disbanded from the ruling body and social attitudes removed the non-commissioned officer from his European counterparts and created a truly American Non-Commissioned Officer Corps.

Inspector General Friedrich Vonstueben of Valley Forge, in his “Regulation for Order and discipline of Troops of the United States”, also known as “The Blue Book” standardized the duties and responsibilities of the NCO during the American Revolution. This book was the beginning of Technical Manuals(TM’s), Regulations, Field Manuals (FM’s), etc... This served as the primary regulation for the thirty years for the United States Army. These duties were put in place for the Sergeant Major, Quartermaster Sergeant, First Sergeant, Sergeants and Corporals.

Some of the duties and responsibilities that were set in 1779 are still in use today. Some of the duties are as follows:

- The sergeant major served as the assistant to the Regimental Adjutant (Commander). He keeps rosters, formed details and gave recommendations concerning management.
- The quartermaster sergeant assisted the regimental quartermaster. He supervises the proper loading and transport of the regiment’s baggage when on march.
- The first sergeant enforced discipline and encouraged duty among the troops, maintained duty rosters and made recommendations to the company commander and kept the company

descriptive books. This document listed the name, age, birth, and prior occupation of every enlisted man in the unit.

- Sergeants and corporals were to train new recruits in all matters of military training including behavior, neatness and sanitation. All sick calls were forwarded to the first sergeant and any disturbances were punished.

During combat, NCO's closed the gaps created by casualties and encouraged the men to be silent and fire rapidly. Development of a strong NCO Corps helped sustain the Continental Army. During the American Revolution to World War II, the Non-Commissioned Officer received his promotion from the Regiment Commander. Often careers were spent within one regiment. If a Sergeant was transferred from one Regiment to another he did not take his rank with him. The only exception was by the approval of the General and Chief of the Army which was rarely approved. Stripes you wore stayed with the unit.

Victory at Yorktown secured independence for the nation. The new nation had to pay for its own defense. The nation was poor and maintaining an army was a heavy burden. The American government purposed a policy that would reduce the number of troops in the Army to a bare minimum, relying heavily upon militia or volunteer troops to prevent uprising and stop Indian disturbances. This was the start of the Reserves and National Guard. Who were untrained, undisciplined and poorly equipped which lead to desertions. With short notice untrained militia were tested during the Northwest Frontier uprising in the 1790's. Two militia units were defeated in 1790 and 1791 by Indian's at the Indiana's Northwest Frontier (known today as Indiana and Ohio).

The Army was doubled from 800 to 1600 men to quell uprisings (known as the "Legion"). Soldiers were well trained and disciplined as they defeated the Indians in the Fallen

Timbers Battle of 1794.

The environment of the Army life changed during the expedition of Captain Lewis and Lt. Clark which required NCO's to take greater care and responsibility of their troops. NCO's ensured their men's cleanliness by holding inspections and five roll calls a day which limited their activities. Punishment for infractions ranged from flogging to cutting off of ears.

In 1821, the war department made the first chevrons for Non-Commissioned Officers. Sergeant Major and Quartermasters wore the chevron above the elbow on each arm. Sergeants and senior musicians wore one on each arm below the elbow and Corporals wore one on each arm below the elbow with all points upward.

In 1832, Congress created the "Dragoon" regiment as part of the regular Army. Dragoons were considered elite troops. They were required to be native-born Americans. To show they were the elite forces, Dragoons introduced a chevron with the point downward in 1833. These soldiers were used for tracking, interpreters and recruiting other native-born Americans and were looked upon as traders.

In 1840, a distinctive sword was introduced to give the NCO Corps further prestige. The sword remains part of the NCO Corps and is still used in ceremonial occasions.

World War I required the first massive training of men for the United States military. NCO's trained four million men of which three million were sent overseas. A typical day started at six o'clock, breakfast at seven, formation at eight and the workday ending at four. Corporals were the primary trainers during this time frame. Lessons emphasized weapons and daytime maneuvers. The protective mask required twelve hours of training were devoted to proper use of the protective mask.

During World War I proved gas warfare was introduced, machine guns ended mounted

charges and air power came of age. The American forces saw limited action in comparison to British and French forces.

After World War I, Congress reorganized the NCO ranks and five NCO ranks were established; Master Sergeant, First Sergeant, Staff Sergeant, Sergeant and Corporal.

The Army drastically reduced in size during World War I and World War II. Enlisted men were often demoted rather than promoted. Alexander Loungeway was a good example of the typical enlisted soldier during this period. 32 years of records show that after joining the Army in 1908. He was promoted to First Lieutenant during World War I. After the war he reverted to the rank of First Sergeant, was demoted to the rank of sergeant, corporal and private first class and prior to his retirement he was promoted to the rank of corporal. In 1922 the Army scheduled reductions for 1,600 Non-Commissioned Officers to reduce its force and save money which caused severe hardships for many Non-Commissioned Officers their families.

Post-World War I budget reductions and the Great Depression led to irregularities in pay. Often the soldier received half his pay or half of his pay in money and the other half in consumer goods or food.

In summary, the Non-Commissioned Officer Corps has a long history starting in 1775. General Friedrich Vonstueben standardized the duties and responsibilities NCO Corps. NCO's became known as "The Backbone of the Army" which stands today and I quote from the NCO Creed: "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 morale courage. I will not forget, nor will I allow my comrades to forget that we are professionals, non-commissioned officers, leaders".

In closing: Remember we are fit to lead others only when we have proven that we can guide

ourselves.

Any Questions?

NCO's have played a significant role in the military through the years and continue to do so today. We must not forget that change is inevitable and we must be adaptable train our troops and accomplish our mission.