

About the author: There is certainly nothing particularly remarkable about me. I have spent the last eighteen plus years in the military in one component or another. I have served on active duty in the US, in Germany, in Kuwait and in Korea. I went to a military college but did not pursue a traditional commissioning path. I spent several years in the enlisted ranks and as an NCO. I have read extensively works of military history and thought. Thus my education, experience and training in things military have produced my perspective. It is but one perspective among many.

Preface:

Recently a soldier from another unit that I have known for some years asked me a telling question. He asked what purpose do officers serve. From his perspective, he is a senior SSG, he sees officers as folks that sign papers. As I reflected on his question several things became apparent to me. Obviously the officers that this individual has come in contact with over the years have not given this individual the impression that they were in charge. This being the case it would seem that the officers that he has met have never really made a difference.

This work started as a file on my computer called Why. It seemed at the time a good temporary name. As I look back it seemed a good name indeed. Why should I bother to write this? Why should any one bother to read it? Why are things the way they are? In the course of laying down my thoughts this one document grew. I extracted many of the thoughts of other subjects that relate to our profession and placed them into other files. Maybe one day those are questions I will feebly attempt to address. This paper deals with the What, Who and Why of officership, from my perspective and understanding.

Why then should I bother to write this? This is my chosen profession. I have dedicated a large portion of my life to the military, sacrificed time, sweat and once or twice a little blood in this endeavor. Often times I look around me and wonder why things aren't just right. What has gone wrong and what might be done to fix it. I wrote this in part to answer questions for myself.

Why then should you bother to read this? This like any other work of opinion is simply submitted into the free world of ideas. In that realm my thoughts will either flourish or die based upon the reasonability and applicability of those ideas in the mind of you, the reader. If you serve then this is your profession too. It is incumbent upon us to seek new ideas and apply our own intellect to create even better ideas. If we are to make the Army and our profession better we have to ask Why; we have to seek to understand what this business is really all about.

This work is based upon one perspective. Each of us develops points of view based on our unique experiences, education and other factors. I too have developed my own points of view, my own opinions, and my own ideas. My ideas are most likely no more correct nor any less correct than anyone else's ideas. Time and experience will mold your personal viewpoints. I present my ideas into the free world of ideas where they may flourish or die based upon the ultimate test of reasonability and utility.

One View of Officership

B.L. Clark

Introduction

Serving our nation and the soldiers that we lead is both an honor and an awesome responsibility. These words although true seem cliché. When one considers the ramifications of the "awesome responsibility" bit from above thoughts invariably turn to the question of what is right and how ought things be.

Organizations large and small develop cultures. Organizational culture develops from the collective experience and historical memory of an organization. Organizations change either because those within the group cause change or because the group succumbs to external pressures. The Army is no different. We each must ask ourselves

One View Of Officership

what is our particular role in the organization; what will we change; will we make the organization better or will we simply adapt to norms and pass our time with the mundane?

Part I: An Officer Defined

"To command is to serve, nothing more, nothing less."

Andre Maldraux

It would be an inadequate work and a failed attempt if we did not begin by asking what does it really mean to be a military officer. Current military education for officers focuses primarily on preparing trainees to assume duties at the next higher level. Pre-commissioning prepares cadets for duties as lieutenants; career courses prepare lieutenants and captains for command and so on. These courses devote little time to the bigger issues of why are we here and what might we really accomplish over time. Those that remain in service long enough to attain the rank and position to have as their job the shaping of the big picture have spent a career doing the business of the day. Our current system runs people through positions in assembly-line fashion and utilizes a hit or miss method of developing big picture thinkers. Our task, as required by the current system, is to learn the myriad of jobs presented to us. The hope is that those that stay will have the capacity for bigger thought. That future leaders will have developed some of this capability themselves and can adapt to training when the time comes to move into organization changing positions.

We cannot change the current system of officer development at present. We can observe the results. We can ask questions and we can ponder possible alternatives in the world of ideas. Our mission is to determine how best to develop ourselves so that we might effect change. The past is filled with examples of how others developed themselves into the sorts of leaders that ultimately changed the organization. An organization changer will figure out what small things we can do on a daily basis to change the organization at his level. In short, we must figure out what it really means to be an officer and strive to become that person. Our actions alone are but small pebbles in a large pond. Many pebbles create a cacophony of ripples. There is also the very real possibility that someone reading this as a very young officer may someday grow to be a large rock in our pond. Change in any organization is not only possible it is inevitable. Our goal is to determine if we are to play a role in that change and what that change should be.

"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future."

John F. Kennedy

Being an officer can be, in my opinion, summarized into four main categories. One must be prepared to do what is right, no matter the cost. An officer must make a difference at his level of operation. He must develop skills and know our craft. Finally

One View Of Officership

an officer must be a professional and take ownership of the greater organization and endeavor to make a difference in the bigger pond.

Being prepared to do what is right no matter the cost is an awesome endeavor but is the very bedrock of what being an officer is all about. Accepting a commission in the military of the United States means to accept an office of trust, responsibility and authority to defend the Constitution and execute the National Military Policy as expressed and directed by the President. These words we all understand but the deeper meaning is lost. Suffice it to say that within the specified tasks listed above there are numerous implied tasks. As an officer you occupy a special role with a special responsibility. You serve not only to execute orders from above but we also serve as a form of check and balance from top to bottom within the organization. Our ultimate duty is to do what is right, in the face of adversity from the enemy, from harsh conditions, from peer pressure, from our own human failings and from pressure from above.

Look for a moment at your oath of office that you recited upon getting commissioned. The order of precedence within that document is significant. You swore to defend the Constitution first, against foreign and domestic enemies. You then swore to obey the orders of the President. Then you swore to obey the orders of officers appointed over you. It is a significant thing that those items fell within that order. It is conceivable, and there are historical cases to look to, that you could one day find yourself faced with orders that conflicted with one or more of the items you swore to obey. At a time like that doing what is right becomes the most costly to you and the most important to the nation. It is then that your role as a check and balance to what is wrong moves to the fore.

We can all probably, or at least hopefully, complete a career without facing a life changing choice such as the scenario discussed above. Doing what is right would seem to be much easier than say the choices that Robert E. Lee, Thomas Jackson or George Washington had to make when fate thrust upon them enormous decisions of what is right and what does duty mean. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are faced daily with small decisions, choices that, depending upon what we decide, make the organization better or worse. As we grow in rank and responsibility these decisions will have greater impact. Making easy wrong decisions early makes it much simpler to make bigger wrong decisions later.

The first virtue in a soldier is endurance of fatigue; courage is only the second virtue.”
Napoleon Bonaparte

Doing the right thing on a daily basis is something that we inherently understand even if we are already in the habit of not doing it. Sending up glowing reports to make higher happy, playing numbers games, failing to work hard and plan proper training are all examples of doing the wrong thing. We all know this. There is no point in dissecting the myriad of things that possibly could be wrong decisions on a daily basis. At your core you always know when they are wrong. If you do not know or if you have already become desensitized to doing wrong you are already lost and should leave the service. The point to be made here is that at your current level, whether platoon, company or staff

One View Of Officership

if you are incapable of telling the cold hard truth, it will be much harder when you hold higher positions. Practice brutal honesty now and it will be less difficult later. Stand up now when you receive an order that is wrong on small issues and it will be less difficult later when a bigger, more wrong order comes. Determine in your mind that you will serve as honorably and as ethically as possible everyday, that you will do your duty in accordance with your oath. Determine that you will never compromise your principles and that you will die or leave the service before you compromise what you believe to be right. If you live that everyday, even on the small things you will have accomplished the greater part of being a good officer and serving your nation well.

Once you have determined to do what is right no matter the cost then finding a way to make a difference at your current level is much easier. Junior officers deal primarily with NCO's and it is here that you can make a great impact. Forcing your NCO's to do what is right can be difficult; the NCO often seeks the most direct route to an objective. You may not know more than your NCO's but you certainly can know what is right and what is wrong. Each platoon, company and battalion in our Army is different and the potentiality to make a difference in each organization is different. The one constant is that you can make a difference just by doing what is right and forcing those below you to do the right thing. As you work hard and learn your job you will figure out other areas that you can impact to make a difference.

Closely aligned with making a difference at you current level is learning your craft. You must endeavor to learn everything that there is to know about our business. The principles of leadership tell us to be technically and tactically proficient. In the schoolhouse those words make sense. Once in a unit, working day to day on the mundane, it becomes more difficult. We all learn by the practical experience of doing but that is not enough. An officer must have a program of self-improvement and education. There are more books written on our profession than any other. It is incumbent upon us to seek the knowledge to understand the bigger picture and to educate ourselves to one day make large organization changing decisions.

Finally officers must be professionals. We must look, be and act the role we are appointed to. We must take ownership of the larger organization and begin early on to consider ways to improve it. We must set ourselves apart from those we lead. Familiarity indeed breeds contempt. We are not an aristocratic society and our troops will little tolerate "dandies". They neither tolerate leaders that enjoy privileges and act no better than they do. Troops will always accept that you enjoy certain privileges. Indeed most will insist that you accept certain positions of favor, i.e. a less crowded tent etc. They enjoy when you show up in the cold and rain to lend a hand with some hard task but they do not expect it. Separate your self from them socially but bond with them emotionally. Be a professional and provide the example and leadership that they expect.

Part II: Those We Lead, Follow and Serve With

"People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf."

George Orwell

One View Of Officership

The ability to truly make a difference requires an understanding of those that make up our Army. Understanding the nature of the Army is key to understanding how we might influence or change the organization. The majority of those that we serve with can be placed into four categories: Idealist, Opportunist, Mercenaries, and Careerist.

Idealists are a rare breed in the Army. These are folks that grew up with a father or an uncle that served. These are the sorts of people that might have been Boy Scouts. These soldiers serve because they truly believe in something bigger than themselves. Often you find these sorts only in the very young, first-term soldiers. The problem is that the Army has a way of changing these kids, or perhaps many of them simply grow out of their previous worldview. A very few retain a healthy dose of their idealistic optimism. In any event these kids make for the very best soldiers if mentored properly, if protected from the damaging negativity bought to the service by others and if protected from callous careerist. It is possible to transform a soldier from one of the groups listed below into a true Idealist, to do so requires leadership.

Opportunists are soldiers that had little else in life to pursue. The military offered a life that was better than anything else around. These soldiers offer a unique challenge. First they comprise a very large portion of the enlisted force in the rank of Specialist and below. Second, these soldiers came to the Army to do a job. How well they do that job depends on how well they are lead. They have the potential to become negative or positive influences in any unit. Many opportunist stay in the Army for more than one term and many become junior NCO's. They are still just pursuing an opportunity until something better comes along. Eventually these soldiers either get out, become careerist or some great leader converts them to an Idealist.

Mercenaries are much like opportunist except that unfortunately Mercenaries are almost always junior officers. These are the kids that spent 2-4 years on scholarship or at West Point receiving an education with the promise to repay their debt through service. Not everyone that receives a paid education is a Mercenary, some are in fact Idealist, but the sad fact is many serve now simply because they have incurred an obligation. Many of your peers or you yourself may fall into this category. You know in your heart that if you are in this business just because you have to be that you are much less effective than you could be. You will never really make a difference if you are simply marking time until your service obligation is complete.

Careerists are those from one of the other categories (except Idealist) that have simply stayed too long and invested too much time to leave until retirement. Their investment of time makes them very wary of personal risk. They are very protective of their personal well-being. These folks have been around long enough to talk like an Idealist. After all Army Values demand that we are all Idealist so how could these career minded folks survive unless they learn the

One View Of Officership

buzz-words of idealism. These are the most dangerous sorts; they are found among officers and NCO's alike and sadly make up a large portion of the force. These folks would seldom do the right thing if it put at risk their career; the brutal truth is something they seldom speak. You will serve with and under these people, you will lead them and they will lead you. Careerist will as a group change the Army, although not for the better. They have done so in the past and will do so again. "Zero-Defects" was a concept born of careerist. In the struggle to make our organization better the self-serving careerist will always be our adversary. These folks follow the "rules" they do not make waves, they are politically correct. They can espouse Army Values while not fully living them.

Understanding the variety of soldiers that populate our Army and the differences in their motivation goes far toward answering the question of how best they should be led. Understanding those we lead, our peers and our superiors makes it much easier to understand how best to make a difference in the organization.

Part III: A Few Principles

What then can be done to influence an organization so large with a long history and a diverse mixture of members? One might well look to history. Better men than me have learned more than I might ever hope to learn on this subject. Even attempting to list the numerous figures from books that have influenced my thoughts over twenty-plus years of studying this subject is inadequate. Many others have penned rules of behavior or principles for actions that have the intent of guiding one along a path of successful military leadership. To be certain many of these are very good indeed. To be successful one must glean the best from these ideas and develop their own. My life-experience, education and the knowledge I have gained from reading about others can be summarized into a few principles of sorts. As stated above, these are not all inclusive of what one must do. These are just a few points that I have come to believe as important.

1. Become your own "Senior Rater".

"If a man does his best, what else is there?"
General George Patton Jr

Young junior officers (and unfortunately some not so young and not so junior officers) spend a lot of time concerned with the perception of their senior rater. We concern ourselves that we must say something when given the opportunity or that we must adjust ourselves to fit the image we believe this person wants. Taken a couple of steps further we begin to cease thinking for ourselves and instead attempt to think "what would my senior rater think". This sort of behavior stifles creativity and original thought. What kind of commander worth his salt would want to be surrounded by a bevy of mindless clones that are too afraid to express an opinion or have an idea that just might be contrary to the group think? To be sure the intent of your boss and your boss' boss is important.

One View Of Officership

It is our duty to execute the intent of those appointed over us. It is not our duty to fundamentally change who we are or to suppress creative thought. It is our duty to provide feedback when it is appropriate. It is our duty to express ideas, no matter how radical. It is the prerogative of your boss to accept or reject your ideas.

Forget living your life to please someone else. Learn your job, do what is right and stand for something. Accept your mistakes and the mistakes of those you lead. Learn from your mistakes and move on. Learn enough about what is right to be able to judge yourself. If you can truly evaluate yourself because you know what is right when you close your eyes at night you will know if you are a good or bad officer and you will know what you must do to improve. Nobody else should ever have to tell you these things.

2. Take your job seriously, Never take yourself seriously.

“The graveyards are full of indispensable men.”

Charles De Gaulle

This principle belongs to GEN Tommy Franks, one of the most down to earth men I have ever met. Everyone has had the misfortune of coming into contact with an arrogant officer. You must know that all men are born fallible. We all were born naked and cold and we will all die and fade away someday. The period in between birth and death will be filled with mistakes. On any given day the life you now lead and the rank you wear could all pass away. A terrible accident and a medical discharge and you are no longer someone that gains respect automatically because of the rank you wear. We are all here to fill a role for a period of time. The rank you wear deserves respect, it is permanent, and once you are gone someone else will fill that position. Take the work you do seriously but never base your ego on your current position. Base your ego on the respect that you personally earn through your actions and the way that you influence others.

3. When in Command, command. When given authority exercise it.

This is taken straight from Patton's Principles. Sun Tzu also provided a sound lesson in this principle when he demonstrated the discipline of his concubine armies before a Chinese king. As an officer you have authority granted by Congress to perform certain things. Your authority is very different than that of an NCO. Your orders may be countermanded by higher but so long as you retain your commission and are not under arrest you retain your authority to lead and command troops and you retain the duty to execute the items in your oath of office. If something within your scope of authority must be done, do it.

4. Understand the different roles of officers and NCO's.

One View Of Officership

“The heathen in his blindness must end where he began. But the backbone of the Army is the non-commissioned man!”

Rudyard Kipling

NCO's are the backbone of the Army, of this I will not disagree. It has been said that NCO's cover the last 100 yards and this is likewise true. The Army simply would not function without the skill, experience and dedication of NCO's. Many officers are told during pre-commissioning training to listen and learn from our platoon sergeants. For very young and inexperienced officers this is sage advice. As we grow in experience it is still wise to seek and accept the opinions and advice of NCO's.

Failure to understand the difference in the roles, duties and responsibilities of NCOs and officers is probably the biggest mistake most officers make. Although young and inexperienced officers make this mistake most often this is not a failing exclusive to them.

Officers are commissioned to execute the national security policy of the United States. We are also charged with ensuring that the organization follows the precepts of The Constitution and preserves that document. We alone have the authority to command. We set policies and priorities. This is our role alone; this is the essence of what we do and not something to be delegated. We are responsible for the collective ability of our organizations to perform their missions. Anything and everything that occurs in your organization at your level is your business. We delegate the execution of tasks to NCOs, that is their function, but we do not lose ownership of the task nor do we allow ourselves to become complacent through delegation and pass off our responsibility to set policies and priorities. At any level in any organization there is but one commander. There is no such thing as a “command team” in the sense that it requires the commander and senior enlisted member to execute decisions. The commander commands, the senior NCO advises, never fall into the trap of allowing your senior NCO to set policies, this is your job. If you allow this to occur you are weak, you are not doing your job and you are doing great damage to the bedrock of our organization.

A Few Rules For Officer NCO Relations

- I. NCO's have a lot of experience and knowledge- most use that to help you execute your intent. Some will use it to persuade you to do things their way. Keep this in mind and use the information around you to make your own decisions.
- II. If given leeway and trusted NCO's will accomplish things you thought impossible. This is the only definition of “NCO business”.
- III. Allow NCO's to enforce standards and discipline issues (i.e. corrective training) at their level. Only get involved when they fail to do their job. Note that allowing NCO's to enforce standards does not mean the same thing as allowing any NCO at any level to set standards. Invariably when officers allow NCO's to add to

One View Of Officership

Army standards the result is an increased burden on enlisted troops. The Army publishes standards in AR 670-1 and gives the commander leeway to utilize judgment in some matters. Do not delegate this authority; force your NCO's to enforce the one Army standard and your intent. Do not allow them to add to standards and thereby nullify the Army standard.

- IV. Avoid as much as practicable giving personal orders to troops, rather give orders to your NCO's or junior officers, allow them to execute and hold them accountable.
- V. Learn where NCO's get their authority from and what their authority consists of. Their specific military authority, i.e. the authority to direct the actions of troops comes from the commander. Their rank only gives them general military authority. Do not fear replacing incompetent, insubordinate and inadequate NCO's with less senior people. The authority that NCO's wield in a company to direct troops comes from the commander; give that authority to those that can and will perform.
- VI. Treat NCO's with dignity and respect. Realize that they have a critical function within the organization.

5. Separate yourself.

We are not called to be liked, loved or understood. We share in the hardships of our troops and we share in the camaraderie of service. If we perform our tasks well, if we sacrifice, know our business and stand for what is right our soldiers will respect us. If we are fair, consistent and principled our soldiers will grow to love us. This love and respect is something that is earned from doing the right thing. It is not a goal unto itself.

Many officers make the mistake of attempting to be like the soldiers they lead, socializing with them and developing too much familiarity. You are different; you have the responsibility to potentially order these folks to die. They expect that you are different and expect that you will maintain a "distance". You cannot party like them, dress like them, act like them or socialize with them and expect that the core of the system of discipline in the Army to remain intact.

6. Give more than you receive.

American officers enjoy privileges. American society claims to be egalitarian but our historical origins are from an aristocratic society; throughout our society position equals privilege. Americans accept this; it is one of the motivating factors that encourage men of all stations to improve themselves. Privilege belongs to position and in no small part reinforces the legitimacy of the position. Privilege must not be sought, demanded or expected. It must not be abused. Remember principle #2 from above.

One View Of Officership

You must bear this in mind as you hold positions that entitle you to privilege. Coupled with privilege is responsibility and duty. You have a duty to give back to the organization much more than you receive. You must work harder; continually thinking of ways and means to improve yourself and your organization. The welfare and training of your troops must always be first in your mind. You swore an oath to serve; you must live that oath to earn the privileges you receive.

7. **Stand for something. Figure out what you believe at your core and stand by that no matter the cost.**

"He who walks in the middle of the road gets hit from both sides."
George Schultz

"In matters of style swim with the current, in matters of principle stand like a rock."
Thomas Jefferson

In the American Military we have a tradition that originated over two centuries ago of allowing officers to resign. This is an important tradition. Our duty to do what is right as we see it, to support and defend The Constitution and to care for the lives and welfare of our troops while accomplishing the mission is unique. We should all be prepared to do what we see as right and if our views so greatly depart from those appointed over us that the gulf is irreconcilable we should be prepared to leave. Compromise of one's principles is not an option.

We as officers must figure out what we believe, we must have core beliefs. There must be things we will fight for, either figuratively or literally. We must stand on those principles and not falter, no matter the cost personally or professionally. If we become so transient in our principles that they can be altered by pressure from our boss or physical danger then we are not fit to serve as officers.

8. **Pack Light.**

"Moral courage is the most valuable and usually the most absent characteristic in men."
General George S. Patton, Jr

Realize that some of the most forward-thinking and intelligent men to have ever worn the uniform did not always meet with success in their lifetime. Albert Thayer Mahan influenced naval thought greatly in the 20th Century with his writings but he was treated as a rather mediocre officer by the US Navy and surpassed by many of his "peers". George S. Patton Jr. was almost booted from the military as a young lieutenant for having the audacity to tell several general officers that they were wrong in their view of armored warfare. Billy Mitchell was court marshaled and forced to leave the service for expressing his views on air power. The list could go on; even now we see examples of men that end their careers by expressing views they hold to be true. Accept that if you truly want to

One View Of Officership

make a difference in the military and if you are truly prepared to stand by your principles that eventually you will make waves and anger someone. Don't get so comfortable that you cannot move on to other things if forced to.

9. Know your business well enough to make a difference.

"The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and the will to carry on."

Walter Lippmann

The most difficult of doing our job is actually knowing the craft. We must know regulations, soldier skills, technical skills, leader skills, history, current events and a myriad of other skills. The process of learning what we must know must be a never-ending endeavor.

Read the biographies of the men that shaped our history. GEN George Marshall spent almost 15 years in the Army and was still a lieutenant. George Patton had served over 20 years and was only a LT COL. GEN "Chesty" Puller was booted out of the active Marine Corps for almost 20 years and had to spend his time in limbo status fighting banana wars for the State Department. These men, like so many others, never stopped learning more. A dead end job with no hope of promotion never stopped them. They read, they wrote they took courses. When fate called them to quickly assume greater rolls they were ready. They had spent a lifetime developing and educating themselves in the art of military leadership.

10. Get out and make yourself uncomfortable.

"They taught me that no man could be their leader except he ate the ranks' food, wore their clothes, lived level with them, and yet appeared better in himself."

T.E. Lawrence

This principle serves two purposes. First, you cannot understand the mind of your troops or appreciate the challenges they face unless you share their hardships from time to time. This does not mean sitting in your heated truck when in the field with them. Get out and walk the perimeter, stand guard with a soldier, use the business end of a sledge hammer or shovel occasionally. Second, you must train your mind to control your body. You can only do this by getting out and doing painful things

11. Do not sweat the small stuff. Focus on what is important. Converse: Some things that seem small are in fact not small at all and deserve a fight.

"Paperwork will ruin any military force."

LT GEN "Chesty" Puller

One View Of Officership

Our mission is relatively simply stated; to train for and fight the nation's battles. Anything and everything that does not directly support that mission is small stuff. In 50, 5 or even one year the small stuff will not matter to anyone.

There are items that seem small at least to most everyone else. Others may say, "this is just the way it is, drive on". The fact is, if the way it is currently adversely affect training for of fighting a war then it is not a small issue and should be challenged.

12. Neither rank nor position makes one right; being right makes one right.

The Army is made up of humans, man by nature in fallible. Rank and position gives one the prerogative to express and impose their will. Men can and are often wrong. Your duty requires you to honestly express yourself to your boss. Once your boss makes a decision you are obligated to follow his decision as long as it is moral, legal, constitutional and in keeping with national policies. Never fear discussing your honest opinion though, even when you know others disagree and may not want to hear what you have to say. Failure to do so disqualifies you for the position you hold.

13. If it is stupid and it works, it is still stupid.

"The only thing harder than getting a new idea into the military mind is getting an old idea out."
B.H. Liddell Hart

Opening a door with a sledge hammer works but it is stupid, there must be a better way. An organization that insisted on always breaking down doors with sledgehammers just because it works would not be effective. This is an extreme example but applicable. In any given situation if enough force or resources are applied the desired result might be achieved. In the Army we do a lot of things that could be done better or smarter if only someone would challenge convention.

14. Trust and empower your people to do their job.

"Surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate authority and don't interfere."
Ronald Reagan

"Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."

General George Patton Jr

Just as it is true that other people are not always right it is true that you are not always right. The fact is that you do not have to be. In any position you have around you years of experience in the form of people that can and will help you accomplish your mission. You must allow your soldiers to do their job and support them in their decisions. Remember however, delegating does not relieve one of ownership. Additionally, checking on the progress of your junior leaders does not imply a lack of trust.

One View Of Officership

15. Perception is not reality.

“I never trust a fighting man who doesn’t smoke or drink.”

Admiral William “Bull” Halsey

‘Never trust a man without a vice; they are hiding something and therefore a liar’

My Father

Unfortunately the officer corps is full of folks that believe that looking good is all that matters for success. These same folks believe that making others look bad is in some way of benefit to them. Do not fall prey to rumormongering and gossip. Contributing to these activities only empowers the weaker among us. Shun those that do not truly share the principles that all officers should live. Look at the substance and true character of others as a guide. Falseness, butt kissing, hypocrisy, selfishness; these are the traits of the weak among us. Do not be fooled by their ability to act the part of a leader.

This principle also applies to inspections, reports and other items that can create a perception of competence. Remember that appearances are not always what they seem. An old saying in the Army is, “An inspection ready unit never succeeded in combat and a combat ready unit never passed an inspection”.

Conclusion

The Army is an ever-evolving organization. We have a long history and numerous traditions but technology, tactics, political demands and the personalities of soldiers continually transform the service. Many factors are uncontrollable; these are the items that test the intellect of leadership. Other items are controllable, such as our organizational culture. These controllable items test the will and courage of leadership. We each have the potential to make a mark on the Army, some great, and some small. We will in fact change the organization regardless of whether we set out to do so or not. Our calling is to leave the organization a better place when we leave than when we arrived.

Bibliography of Sorts: As stated in the introduction, my views are based partially on my own experience and partially on the works of others. Over the years I have read many books and there is no possible way that I can honestly attribute the genesis for some of my ideas to the appropriate authors. I can but attempt to list some of the works that have influenced me most and hope that in so doing I do just to the originator of the idea.

De Re Militari-The Military Institutions of the Romans; Flavius Vegetius Renatus

One View Of Officership

Western military thought and organization owe much to this work. Vegetius understood much about human nature and organization and discipline of an army. American military officers would do well to understand the history of Rome and her legions. The similarities between the transformation of the Roman Republic into the Empire with legions thrown about the world enforcing Roman peace is striking when compared to the events of the last half-century. Reading the institutions one can see many similarities between the Roman soldier and the American soldier. The principles that Vegetius advocated for change and transformation in the Roman Army apply to the American Army. One point to be remembered; Vegetius' recommendations were not heeded and Rome eventually collapsed.

My Reveries Upon The Art of War; Field Marshall Maurice de Saxe

Saxe understood much of human nature and leading men. Saxe was a true reformer.

Attacks; Field Marshall Erwin Rommel

Every American officer should read Rommel. Beyond the fact that he was a tactical genius he teaches us much about being an officer. His trails as a junior officer during WWI teach much about selfless service. His actions upon returning to Germany after North Africa in WWII and discovering the true meaning of nazism teaches us much about the meaning of doing what is right no matter the cost. Attacks does not cover his actions against an unjust government but it lays a sound foundation for understanding the man that laid down his life to do what was right later in life.

The Works of Rudyard Kipling; Ruyard Kipling

A book of poems seems a strange place to find potential for the education of an officer. Kipling traveled and wrote extensively about the lives of British soldiers on the far reaches of the Empire. His words convey the emotion of the moment. Reading his works opens a window to the mind of men at arms. Humans are always the same; the troubles they face and the emotions they feel are always the same when faced with similar circumstances. The British toiled in the same countries over a century ago that the US now finds itself. Kipling can teach us much.

The General: Robert L. Bullard and Offership in the United States Army; Allan R Millet

Presents an excellent discussion of the introduction of management science into the military art. Discusses how this materialistic system with quantifiable data makes service less selfless. Bullard was of the opinion that a system dependent upon technology and quantifiable data replaced "manly honor". His views are not nearly as 19th Century as they may seem at first glance. Why the hell do I care "who moved the cheese" anyway? We would do well to replace systems that allow the weaker among us to survive and progress in rank simply because they have mastered the system.

The Defence of Duffer's Drift; Swinton

An easy, good read but also a must read. If you ever forget principle #13 "If it is stupid and it works, it is still stupid", reread this little book.

This Kind of War; T.R. Fehrenbach

One View Of Officership

Good history but more importantly good lessons in why it is important to always look for ways to make the organization better. The section on the Battle of Kunu-ri ought to send chills up the spine of any leader. Undisciplined troops will fail when their technology and logistics no longer supports them. The American Army today is not so very different from those soldiers that went into the valley at Kunu-ri as some may like to believe. Many of our soldiers consider themselves technicians; they are accustomed to comfortable garrison lives. Take away our technological and logistical advantages on any battleground in the world today and discipline will collapse just as it did in the mountains of Korea. Read this book and then you should never again ask why think of subjects like “how can I change the organization”.