

## AS WE SEE IT . . .



Like many an individual, we'd like the power to see ourselves as others see us. Thus, we are indebted to "Army Times," for its look at us in its Oct 15 1955 issue, reprinted with grateful acknowledgment.

### A SALUTE TO NGA

ON THE WALLS of National Guard Association headquarters in Washington are pictures of the organization's past presidents, nearly all of whom served in times when the presidency was perhaps less an honor than it is today, yet was more an honorary than a working office. They were men who, as one Guardsman put it, carried the association's business in a brief case and considered national headquarters to be wherever the president's hat was hanging.

The relatively informal nature of the association under most former presidents can be taken as a commentary on the times as they affected the National Guard. In the old days the Guard's problems were less complex, if no less real, than they have been in recent years. The traditional state role was so predominant that the Guard had few problems in connection with the federal government. If concerted action was less possible, it was less needed.

When the Guard's importance as a national force increased greatly during the First World War—and when its fighting men disproved the old "tin soldier" theories—all that began to change. The Guard's stature—on the local and state as well as the national level—has been growing ever since. So have its interests and problems.

There can be little doubt that the National Guard Association, as the national spokesmen for all Guardsmen, has kept pace with the requirements placed upon it by the Guard's ever-increasing national defense role.

Testimonials to its energy and vigilance are not hard to find. They are, in fact, too numerous to mention here, except for one essential listing: The efforts of the association have kept control of the National Guard in the hands of the states and away from the federal government.

It is not enough, however, to say that the association has kept pace with the times. There are certain things about its operation which have won a rather unusual reputation in Washington, where associations abound. Here are a few of those things:

While NGA has interests to protect, it does not operate from atop a soap box. It does not jump to its feet and shout over comparatively trivial matters. It has shown a remarkable ability to keep each problem in perspective.

The association is not a "gimme" organization. Its

requests have centered around the interests of national defense, not the financial interests of individuals.

Officials of the association know what they are doing before they do it. Their decisions are thoughtful, and seem never to be based on partial or unconfirmed information. Their appearances before Congressional committees always are impressive.

In a few words, the actions of the association and its representatives seem always to be mature and in good taste. The result has been that the organization enjoys an uncommon respect—even from those who sometimes find themselves at odds with the group.

Occasionally someone points out that the association's position is made easier because it represents a tightly-knit body of officers and men whose collective interests can be easily defined. Further, it is said, the state status of the Guard brings many local, state and Congressional leaders to its defense.

All this may be true, but the Guard and the Guardsmen have had to fight for their pride and prestige and accomplishment. Mere evolution did not bring the Guard its respect or lead it to capture the public's imagination or hand it the thanks of a grateful nation. The Guardsmen won all this themselves, individually and collectively.

It is no less true that unity, numbers and local support are not enough to give the Guardsmen—or any group—effective representation on a collective basis. Any private should know why: The most essential element is leadership.

And thus we come to the very distinguished gentleman from Minnesota.

Many Guardsmen had a hand in making the National Guard Association what it is today, but their efforts merely supplemented the work of Maj Gen Ellard A Walsh, who has earned the rightful title of "Mr National Guard." He supplied the essential leadership which gave the association the strength to become the collective voice of all Guardsmen. More than any outsider knows, respect for the association is respect for the Minnesotan; the association's effectiveness and maturity are centered in him.

The association's business is no longer in a brief case. The president's hat—and the past presidents' pictures—now have a home, and a good one.

# THE National Guardian



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### dear guardsmen:

It was quite a jump—from Boise, Idaho, to Washington, DC—especially when it involved packing-up a wife, a three-year-old daughter (who had just had a touch of polio), and another who had joined the family less than four months earlier, for the long auto trip.



And when 2d Lt Vestal L. Baker arrived at 100 Indiana Ave NW after a week of mountains, plains, and fog to take up his new duties as reporter for THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN, he probably

wondered what had hit him. All hands were involved in the myriad details of arranging for the NGAUS' New Orleans Conference, dealing with production of a comprehensive Building Fund campaign, helping to produce a new information booklet (see the back cover of this issue), bedding-down the magazine's November issue, feeding reports and Resolutions into the Mimeograph machine's gaping mouth, and generally flying 16 directions at once.

There was a home to find; furniture (some of it damaged in transit) to be received; a family bedded-down; the Washington area's traffic circles, squares, and clover-leaves to be figured-out. Peace and quiet descended with the "New Orleans contingent's" departure for the South, and, somehow, everything fell into place.

Lieutenant Baker had been well-conditioned for his experience, with childhood in his native Montana and temporary residence in California and Oregon before settling-down in Idaho. Studies in commercial art and advertising, experience on the *Idaho Daily Statesman* and *Idaho Free Press*, followed by two years as PIO for the Idaho National Guard (with service before that in the 116 Ord Co and the 123 Trans Bn) were good background for the Washington spot. And, once he gets out of the hectic District, there's peace and quiet to be found in a rural Vienna, Va., home.

### THE STAFF

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### our cover

For more about the cover illustrations, see the article beginning on page 10.