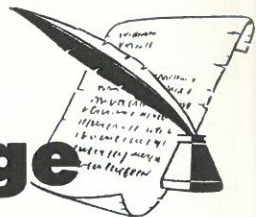


The President's Page



TIME FOR EARLY BIRDS

WHENEVER a member of the Headquarters Staff of the Association is detailed to attend a meeting or conference of the faithful, at some place in the proceedings he is met with the query: What are the purposes of the Association, and what has my membership therein got me?

The first part of the question can be answered very simply, for the purposes of the Association are set forth in the Constitution of the organization, to wit: "To promote and support adequate national security; and to foster and improve the National Guard of the United States and the Air National Guard of the United States."

The second part is not so easily answered, and unless the individual concerned can answer the question to his own satisfaction, it is very doubtful that "ye editor" can do so. As one who has been a member of the Association for some 36 years, the thought never occurred that the Association was established long ago and maintained all these years to give any particular individual something which would benefit him personally or, in the vernacular, give him a run for his money.

The fact remains, however, that these questions never have been answered in their entirety. Accordingly, a brief of quite some magnitude has been prepared, listing the accomplishments of the Association, over a period of three-quarters of a century. This summary has been distributed to the States, Territories, District of Columbia, and headquarters of major elements of the National Guard, and we venture the wish that those in authority may see fit to make a much wider distribution. With that, perhaps, will come the realization of not only what has been accomplished but how much we, of today, owe to those of yesterday. The service which they have rendered is even more remarkable when we consider that for more than 60 years the officers who served as members of the various committees received no compensation whatsoever and seldom, if ever, were even reimbursed for expenses. As a matter of fact, it was not until 1 January 1950, that some of the officers of the Association received any compensation. In many instances, the same holds true today because so many of our people insist on contributing their services without compensation or reimbursement.

True it is, as a result of their work in promoting the National security and enhancing the National Guard through the medium of a long list of legislative enactments, very material benefits have redounded to the benefit of individual members, but that has been, in the main, purely incidental.

The National Guard and its Association have indeed come a long way since that day in 1878 when a group of volunteer officers who had served in the Union and Confederate Armies met in Richmond, Va., to discuss matters of practical reform designed to make the Organized Militia of that day a more effective instru-

ment in our system of National security. As a result of that meeting, a National Guard Association was organized a year later at St. Louis, Mo. It is a far cry from 1878 to 1946 when we met at Buffalo, N. Y., and established the Association on its present basis.

By the time this issue of THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN comes out, less than two months will remain until the commencement of a new fiscal year, and once again it will be time for the enrollment of the faithful as members of the National Guard Association for another year. Now that most of our National Guard has returned from Federal service, we venture the hope that Fiscal Year 1954 will break all membership records, and ere the year closes we will not only surpass the high-water mark of 1950 when we enrolled more than 35,000, but we will enroll all of our potential of 40,000.

Coincident with May Day, the annual "Early Bird" membership campaign will be underway. Last year the "Early Bird" response was quite exceptional and there is good reason to believe that this year the "Early Bird" enrollment will far exceed that of a year ago. Impetus for the campaign will be given as a result of the meetings of the Executive Council and Standing Committee on Membership to be held in Washington 25-26 April. By the fore-part of April, "Early Birds" had flocked in from Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin. We hope that in the not too far distant future practically all of our membership will be in the "Early Bird" category.

There is some satisfaction, that notwithstanding complications resulting from the Korean Emergency, our membership is now some 500 in excess of last year, although approximately 1,900 short of the objective fixed for Fiscal Year 1953 by the Standing Committees on Finance and Membership. By the time the 75th or Diamond Jubilee General Conference of the National Guard Association of the United States gets underway at San Diego, Calif., 19-22 October, we hope that our enrollment will be 100%. We know from experience that if the States, Territories, District of Columbia, divisions, non-divisional units, air units, officers and warrant officers are of a mind that it will be done, then it will be done.

As of 1 March, 14 States had a 100% enrollment, and 27 other States, Territories and the District of Columbia were within a fraction or a few percentage points of a perfect enrollment, and for this performance we are most appreciative. For the Fiscal Year 1954 we sincerely trust that instead of a total of 41 reaching the ultimate goal we will be able to report that 52 entities will have done so. We submit the case to you and know that it will be in good hands.

E. Walsh



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dear guardsmen:

We get a lot of reading done during the hour-long streetcar-bus trip between Washington and our Maryland suburb, and pick up some interesting information that way. Here's one quote that caught our eye:

"All now recognize that the officer who has not studied war as an applied science, and who is ignorant of modern military history, is of little use beyond the rank of captain. The principle of selection, pure and simple, is gradually being applied to the promotion of all officers, especially in the higher grades. As years go on this system will be more and more rigidly enforced."

That could have appeared in something written just yesterday, but it's from a letter dated "Gibraltar, April 19, 1897," by the "father" of "The Wolseley Series" of military writings, to the editor of the series.

"It is gratifying to know that a large proportion of our young officers are ambitious, and without doubt there is now many a subaltern who hopes to be a Field-Marshal or to be shot in the attempt," the letter continues. "Experience enables me to warn all those determined men of how small their chance is of ever reaching any great position in the Army unless they devote many of their spare hours every week to a close study of tactics and strategy as dealt with in the best books upon recent wars."

Those comments were intended for the British officer 56 years ago. Despite growth of the US Army's military educational system, it's remarkably apropos for the American officer—Guardsman or Regular—of today.

THE STAFF

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our cover

Veterans who've been through it can feel smugly superior; recruits who haven't, may get a vicarious taste of what they've missed, by our cover photo of hapless 37th "Buckeye" Div trainees getting a bellyful of Louisiana mud on Camp Polk's Infiltration Course. The demolition charge that just has been set off adds a touch of battlefield realism. (Army Photo)