



MG Charles M. Kiefner, President, NGAU

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

CHANGES IN THE NGAUS' ELECTIONS PROCESS UNDER CONSIDERATION

Those who attended the 110th NGAUS General Conference last fall in San Antonio will agree, I'm sure, that the election for president was an interesting and in some ways exciting experience. What many also would agree is that the conduct of that election demonstrated that some changes are needed to improve the process.

To that end, shortly after assuming the presidency, I appointed a special study committee headed by Maj Gen Drennan A. (Tony) Clark of Nevada to examine what happened in San Antonio (and before) and what could be done to avoid the pitfalls experienced in the conduct of the 1988 election.

First, it should be noted that 1988 was not the first time we have had vigorously contested elections in the NGAUS. Neither is it the first time we have had vigorously contested elections for president. However, it was the first time we have had two sitting NGAUS vice presidents, one Army and one Air, competing over the future leadership of this Association. This was one aspect of the experience that begged for examination.

What did seem new in the 1988 experience was that the emotions between the two camps were much more exaggerated last year.

The Clark Committee identified several reasons why. One, of course, might be that both candidates for president last year brought long experience, very senior status and vast networks of supporters. Thus, both Maj Gen Francis R. Gerard of New Jersey and I found ourselves with strong followings as we pursued our campaigns from home station to San Antonio and the Conference.

What was different last year was the change in the NGAUS By Laws in 1986 that made it more likely we would run against each other. This was the change, brought in good faith as a good idea, that the NGAUS have two vice presidents instead of one as before: vice president/Army and vice president/Air. But going further than

that, in changing the By Laws, the provision that prohibits either an NGAUS president or vice president from running for reelection was retained for both vice presidents. That created a sort of "up-or-out" system.

It should be noted here that this provision of non-reelection was put in the By Laws in the 1960s for good and sufficient reason. Over the years, we had had several NGAUS presidents who sought and won reelection for several or many terms. Such a system may have been useful in the times of such towering National Guard leaders as Ellard A. Walsh and Milton A. Reckord in the pre- and post-World War II period. Now, however, it would be an impediment to vigorous and younger leadership.

This year at the NGAUS 111th General Conference, delegates will be asked to approve a slight change in this procedure as a first step in helping us avoid another tumultuous presidential election in 1990. At the instigation of our immediate past president, MG Ansel M. Stroud Jr., the NGAUS Executive Council is proposing merely to delete the provision that prohibits a vice president from seeking reelection. This may and probably will allow the Nominating Committee to propose a name for president and then recommend reelection of the other vice president. And, of course, should the Nominating Committee choose a third party as its candidate for president, both vice presidents could be renominated.

Going beyond this, the remainder of the Clark Committee's ideas have been referred to the NGAUS Long Range Planning Committee for further study and refinement, and possible presentation to the General Conference in some future year. The Clark Committee recommended, for example, that the office of immediate past president be abolished, that the office of "president elect" be created.

It also recommended that one vice presidency be eliminated. This idea would be designed to smooth the ascendency to the top position in the Association, create continuity among the officers (which the immediate past president now is designed to provide) and to encourage those wishing to lead this Association as a top officer to begin at the bottom.

This latter notion has merit. In years gone by—and in some other organizations—men and women who aspire to the presidency begin by seeking election to a lower office. In the NGAUS, it has proved valuable if they have served a term or two on the Executive Council. This is an idea worth pursuing.

The Clark Committee also has some other ideas. It suggested that so long as the Executive Council has two positions for retired/separated members, that retired Guardsmen not be permitted to serve in the "line" position on the Council (one Army, one Air from each of six areas). This would match the current requirement that the adjutant general member from each of the areas be a serving AG, and that when he ceases to be TAG, he automatically leaves the Council. We would appreciate the membership's views on this idea.

Another idea, which I have personally supported for some years, is to abolish the two at-large company grade members and elect one company grade member from each of the six National Guard areas. That proposal, also, went to the Long Range Planning Committee.

It should be added, finally, that yet another approach is to do nothing. It ain't broke, don't fix it" always is a policy that should be followed if the circumstances dictate.

The officers and the Executive Council will be supporting at the Detroit Conference the one narrow proposal to provide all traditional Guardsmen with the opportunity to plan, coordinate and accomplish a unit training assembly without the intervention of the full-time work force.

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COVER:

The plight of three California gray whales trapped off the coast of Alaska captured the attention of the nation and the world. Coordinating the rescue effort was the Alaska National Guard. Shown is an Alaska National Guardsman comforting a trapped whale. Photo, SPC Wade Palmer, AKNG. Design, Johnson Design Group.

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