



Major General William J. McCaddin, President, NGAUS

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## THE STATE ASSOCIATIONS: "THE GRASSROOTS" HAS THE CLOUT

It was called to our attention recently that the Minnesota National Guard Association had celebrated its 100th Anniversary. We suspect there are several others of about the same vintage and our hat is off to all of them, the old and the new.

We—the National Guard—owe a great deal to our state associations. They are, without question, the basis of much of the success which the Guard enjoys and we were reminded of this when we read an article in a recent issue of the *Chicago Tribune* in which there appeared an interesting quote attributed to Mr. Harold Chase, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

According to the *Tribune* writer, William Currie, Mr. Chase declared that, "The National Guard Association is probably the strongest [Defense] lobby in Washington." Mr. Currie then proceeded to develop his own theory that the "reserve lobby" is effective because (according to his figures) "seventy-one Congressmen are either retired or reserve officers, and 17 are on Congressional committees that vote on defense authorization bills."

We suppose that it is possible, following the line of Mr. Currie's logic, that an individual with prior military service might demonstrate a continuing interest in military affairs. But we are far more convinced that the underlying reason for the ability of NGAUS to carry its mission at the national level is far easier to explain.

What counts most as we see it is not this supposed "old boy tie" of past military service in the Guard or any other component but the ties that members of Congress have—with their voting constituencies! Surely there is nothing surprising or sinister about this.

NGAUS members live in the communities their Congressmen represent. Often, they have gone to school with the men and women who now

represent them in Congress. As present members of Congress moved up the legislative ladder, many of their friends back home became community leaders and rose to positions of leadership in the National Guard system.

The state associations represent still another way for voices from "back home" to be heard. Many state associations are sufficiently interested—and motivated—to come to Washington at least on an occasional basis to follow-up on the work that they normally do in their home communities to acquaint members of Congress with the needs and the programs which have been identified by the national leadership for priority attention.

Some states are more effective than others. We, at the NGAUS national level, always welcome participation by the state associations.

We are proud of the partnership which characterizes the relationship between NGAUS and state associations. Make no mistake—it is a partnership. The Constitution and By-laws of NGAUS makes no provision for chapters—and state associations are not chapters. They are independent state organizations, each in its own way especially mindful of the problems associated with the constituency it represents.

This partnership is a "triad" which consists of the state association, the state adjutant general and NGAUS. The "terms" of the partnership vary from state to state—but the fact always remains that the 53 adjutants general are the commanders, under their governors, of the Guard.

The adjutants general and the state associations represent what is frequently referred to as "the grassroots." This has been defined as "a source of independent popular opin-

ion," and it is our observation that indeed it is! But it is from this level that we muster the shock troops, the men who carry the mail.

One of the truly rewarding aspects of the presidency of this organization has been the opportunity to carry the NGAUS message to a good many of the state association conferences in the course of a two-year term in office. It has been gratifying, and it has been instructive, to see how the different state associations function.

There is another thing about these associations which will, in time, have substantial impact upon the conduct of affairs at the national level. This is found in the emerging role in the state organizations of women and our younger officers in leadership roles. As this trend becomes more pronounced, it will add significantly to the esteem in which the National Guard will be held at the national as well as state level.

This seems like a logical time of year to reflect upon the roles of the state associations. It is a time of year when we begin our study of the array of proposed resolutions which have come out of the states, and which are offered to the Executive Council of NGAUS for presentation to the membership.

This is also a time of year when we begin to get a sensing of the representations which the states will send to the NGAUS General Conference in the fall, and to the subjects which are likely to be of interest to the delegates. It is also a time when we reflect upon the truism that what makes it all work is the fact that the strength of the whole is equal to, or greater than, the strength of the separate pieces.

In short, the strength and vitality which we possess at the national level is, pure and simply, a reflection and a concentration of the dynamic spirit from the states.

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COVER: A Florida Guardsman holds an elderly Cuban woman who has escaped to the United States. See page 20. Photo by Sp5 George Mirabal, 107 PAD and design by Tom Powers of Bill Duffy Associates.

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