

Major General William J. McCaddin, President, NGAUS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

LAST WORD

This tenant's two-year lease on this space began at a most auspicious time, in 1978—the Association's centennial year. It was a landmark occasion for NGAUS. The Secretaries of the Army and the Air Force both came to St. Louis to help us commemorate our first 100 years—and so did General Al Haig, then the Supreme Commander, Allied Forces in Europe.

I vividly recall how General Haig sketched a picture of the world situation, which was both lucid and comprehensive.

General Haig cited a number of alarming figures with respect to the marked increase in Russian defense spending. He put their spending at 4 to 5 percent each year for the past 15 years to a point where up to 15 percent of their gross national product was probably being allocated to military expenditures.

He also said some other things which took on new significance in the light of events in Africa in 1979, and in Afghanistan more recently. He noted that Soviet power was becoming increasingly global. "They are able to project Soviet power 2,000 to 3,000 miles from the Soviet homeland. They are changing the basic threat facing Western nations."

There are many other things which we will long remember about St. Louis in 1978. There was a reenactment of the welcoming speech which the Mayor of St. Louis made 100 years earlier. The first NGAUS conference came a year after the devastating strikes of 1877 which provoked widespread violence in many U.S. cities. The present-day mayor of St. Louis noted that, "Now 100 years later, we still find ourselves in need of the National Guard. For we still have disagreements and at times words fail us and at times the power of persuasion is what we have to fall back on!"

And these, too, like the words of General Haig, proved to be prophetic.

Twenty-four months have passed since the centennial conference of the NGAUS and now the Association, under its new slate of officers, is well away into the second century. We have enjoyed being part of the transition into this new era, which also coincides with the beginning of a new decade. But if we seem to be thinking in terms of change and transition, we must also point out the great sense of continuity which characterizes our Association. This continuity, this unbroken chain which links us with our past and with our destiny, is ample evidence of the stability which is inherent in the National Guard system.

Some years back, a Chief of the National Guard Bureau described the Guard as "the system that works". We think these words say a lot. We believe that the National Guard is . . . the system that works. It works because it can count upon the people who must labor in the vineyards to make it work. We find it is little short of amazing how each generation and each decade produces new leadership to pick up where the old leadership left off. There are no gaps, no missing links.

Each NGAUS administration is strengthened by the system which starts when an officer is elected, works his way "up the chairs" and eventually passes into the role of a working "elder statesman".

Our purpose, at this time, is to comment on several aspects of the National Guard system which I have been privileged to get to know better in my two-year stint as your president. These are the things I should like to comment upon in this final essay before turning over this space to my successor.

The strength of the National Guard, now as always in the past, lies in its

relationship with the states. In our visits to the states, this long-standing belief has been confirmed. Every state has its differences, every state has some distinguishing mark and each has its own singular pride.

Getting to know the state associations has been a privilege. Through them, we have enjoyed many a fine forum which has enabled us to talk to men and women of the Guard. We would be remiss if we did not salute the efforts and the accomplishments of the state associations.

We set out, in 1978, to pick up the initiative already underway to focus attention on the role of the retired "community" within the Guard Association family—and we hoped to increase the involvement of the company grade officers. It has been a source of great personal and professional satisfaction to see how both groups have responded.

Under Major General Robert G. Moorhead of Indiana, the Graduates and Alumni of the National Guard ("GANG") have taken form to increase the participation of retired and separated officers no longer active in the Guard but anxious and willing to be active in the Association. Under the leadership of Captain Robert B. James, Jr., of Ohio, the company grade "caucus" has started to produce ample evidence that we need have no fear that the "next generation" won't be prepared and equipped to assume leadership roles in the affairs of the Association. All of us in the Guard Association owe a debt of gratitude to these two officers for their fine work.

This column is not intended to be a substitute for the annual report of the president, which will be published in the December issue of NATIONAL GUARD magazine. But it is a uniquely appropriate place to mention—in a sense as "the last word"—the major area of em-

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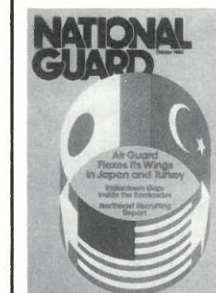
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COVER: The flags of Turkey, Japan and the United States join together in symbolism of the friendships and new understanding which developed between U.S. National Guard units and the military of these countries during this year's annual training. Cover design by Tom Powers of Bill Duffy Associates.

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