FAREWELL TO A PIECE OF NGAUS HISTORY

T here have been many Presidents' Messages in this space which have borne more mass communication in nature than the one on which we are about to embark. But none have been more profound—in the sense that this one is about friendship.

In the combative world of Washington D.C., with its penchant for complexity, the set-piece formulation of battle lines and its confrontational environment, there is an occasional breath of fresh air. It is not too frequently encountered in this town. But it is easy to recognize and enjoyable to experience, once you get over the initial chills. This explanation is a prelude to the simple fact that this month's Message is a farewell, and a tribute, to a friend. Colonel Willard D. "Mac" McGlasson is retiring as the Deputy Executive Vice President of the National Guard Association after 22 years on the job.

Mac will probably shudder when he reads this. He has deliberately honed the art of acting mean and cantankerous in the way newspapermen have been seen in so many legendary movies and shows like "Front Page." As he has moved through the ladder of NGAUS staff positions from executive status, he has remained a newspaperman at heart—and militantly proud of it.

He will unquestionably be horrified to find that there are those of us who do regard him as a breath of fresh air in the all-too-crass environment of our Nation's Capitol. Mac is known to many of us for a give-away twinkle in his eye when he has been a party to a patently pointless briefing or press conference. And when he summarizes such an event the word he uses is not likely to be "horsefeathers!"

Mac came east from southern California over two decades ago to join the staff of the National Guard. He had, even then, the feathery look of one who spent a lot of time outdoors and he affected the manner and "pentagonese" and "academic jargon." But because communication is an important element of our business as an Association seeking to keep 48,000 members and many hundreds of others informed, no one around one Massachusetts Avenue seriously quarreled with Mac when he wielded his dagger-like blue pencil. It didn't take taggantizers—even including Association presidents—very long to find out that he knew what he was doing. And anything we wrote was always the better for what Mac had to contribute to it.

Being a perfectionist and an addict to detail has its penalties. Mac has sometimes marched a long way, and we suspect, frustrating us. Like many who men pursue their way with conviction and dedication, he frequently found it hard to compromise. But he left the playing power and the officers and staff of the Association learned to live with the beneficent tyrant Mac exercised in his quest to meet deadlines and to extend the influence of the National Guard Association.

The last quality which characterizes him is also the best—and that is his great capacity for friendship. Not the backslapping kind of friendship—but that simply is not his style. The kind of friendship is the best kind, because it is real.

It is one of the sad things about the nation's major associations that many of what staff members accomplishes is within the realm of relative anonymity. Second class postage that much of what staff members accomplish is not known by many during his years. There are probably many more who—time and place being what it is—never got to know, or who may know him only as a name in the byline of a column, or a Kaiser... That's too bad. He is someone worth knowing and we hate to see him go. And that's no "horsefeathers!"