



Major General Edward R. Fry, President, NGAUS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

ONCE AGAIN—HAIL TO THE CHIEF!

By the time the complicated technology of the modern publication process turns these typewritten words into print on glossy paper, an important transition will be underway in Room 2E394 of the Pentagon, the office of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau. For the fifteenth time since 1921 a new chief will be moving into the front office to take charge of the machinery of the Bureau and to exercise the special sort of stewardship over the affairs of the Army and Air National Guard that makes the chief unique among Pentagon officials.

Lieutenant General LaVern E. Weber, who will complete his tour of duty on August 21, is the fourteenth National Guard chief, five earlier chiefs having been active Army officers. As we say "hail and so long" to General Weber, the reader is cautioned to remember that we are personally reflecting on a relationship that stems from the "neighboring states" status we have enjoyed, respectively, as citizen soldiers of Kansas and Oklahoma.

All friendship and admiration aside, we believe his tour of duty at the helm of the National Guard Bureau will be remembered for many accomplishments. But for the purpose of this farewell salute and as a passing commentary on the post he has held, we have several observations to make. It seems to us, that it was during his watch that we have seen the fulfillment of a growing spirit of partnership with the actives in the best interests of the nation's defense system. And when this period is more minutely scrutinized by the historians of military affairs, we think it will be identified with the exploration of new concepts and new vistas to make it possible to display the multi-faceted aspects and capabilities of the National Guard system.

We think it is very important to note that our National Guard system is capable of producing the Vern Webers, the Fran Greenliefs and the Wimpy

Wilsons—just to mention these last three gentlemen who have held the title of "Chief." Furthermore, we are confident, based on this brief excursion into history, that the new Chief of the National Guard Bureau will in very short order demonstrate once again the continuity of this tradition of superb leadership.

In the year ahead, the National Guard Bureau will celebrate its 75th anniversary since it was founded in 1908 as the Militia Bureau in the War Department. From the very outset it was one of the major goals of this Association to have a National Guard officer designated to serve as the chief. This was sidetracked during the first World War but became an important objective in the post-World War I improvements to the National Defense Act.

Since President Woodrow Wilson appointed the first National Guard chief (Major General George C. Rickards of Pennsylvania) in 1921, each successive chief has come from the Guard, and we submit that this is one of the progressive moves that led us logically, and inevitably, to the Total Force nature of national defense.

Each chief has brought his own special strengths to the job, each has exerted his own particular influence on the course of events and each has put his own "stamp" on the character and even the makeup of the National Guard Bureau. But all have had in common one very essential characteristic, the total appreciation of the state-federal connection and a commitment to the peacetime chain of command and the sovereignty of the state.

The important role of the Federal Government in the evolution of the National Guard of the preeminent cornerstone of the "reserve system" was, as we know, sadly neglected from the time of the Militia Act of 1792 until the passage of the Dick Act in 1903 and 1908.

The National Guard Bureau has,

since 1908, been the focal point for the improvement and the increased efficiency of the National Guard. It has given the National Guard a viewpoint and a spokesman in the development of policy, programming and budgeting. Although the Bureau is a large and somewhat complex mechanism composed of a hard-working "mix" of National Guard personnel on full-time duty, regulars fulfilling a normal general staff tour and career civilians, it has come to be seen in many ways in the person of "the chief."

Last year we were forced to take issue with the Department of Defense over an aspect of a proposed change in the law with respect to how, and with whom, certain statutory general officer positions were filled.

In seeking to address itself to a congressional initiative with respect to the size and scope of the active duty general officer corps, DoD sought to downgrade the requirements of certain posts—including that of Chief of the National Guard Bureau—to be general officer billets. In fact, it even sought to remove the requirement that the chief had to be an officer of the National Guard component.

We quickly and decisively opposed any such action. For the time being, at least, this aspect of the general officer reduction issue seems to have been set aside. But the occasion of welcoming a new Chief of the National Guard Bureau prompts us to recall once again the wisdom of the NGAUS leadership who, as far back as almost 75 years ago, launched the successful fight to make certain the Guard out in the field would be represented by a Guardsman in the highest councils of the military establishment.

As we bid farewell to Vern Weber, and as we prepare to welcome his successor, we rededicate ourselves to the proposition that, with all due respect, the leadership for the Guard must continue to come from the Guard.

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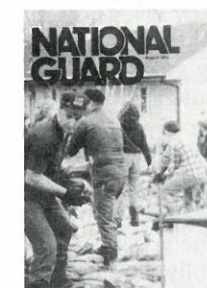
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COVER: Three major rivers converge in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and when all went out of their banks last spring the Indiana Air National Guard responded to the call by providing personnel to supervise youthful volunteers in filling sandbags and shoring up aging dikes.

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