



Henry W. McMillan
Major General, FLARNG
President
National Guard
Association of
The United States

A proud farewell

THIS is the last time I will have the privilege of composing a President's message to the members of the National Guard Association of the United States. My term of office is due to end on the final day of our 96th General Conference, and a new team will have taken up the reins of leadership by the time this issue reaches its readers.

Serving as president of this Association has been one of the most gratifying experiences of my life. I have been an active participant in Association affairs for more than 16 years, and a strong supporter of its goals for even longer. I believe most strongly, as did my predecessors, that the National Guard has managed to survive and maintain its position of eminence among the reserve forces chiefly through the constant vigilance and exertions of our Association. The efforts we have exerted, back through the years, to strengthen and preserve the Guard as a state-oriented arm of the national defense establishment should be a source of pride to all of us.

I will miss all that is entailed in being the head of this great organization. I will miss the challenges of defending the Guard's interests in Washington. I likewise will miss the frequent opportunities to influence the course of national events as they affect the Guard. Most of all, I will miss the very great privilege of working and associating with so many outstanding Guardsmen from every part of the country—Adjutants General, commanders, leaders and members of the many fine State National Guard Associations, and dedicated National Guardsmen and Guardswomen at every level. And most certainly I will miss working with the Association's outstanding professional staff, whose dedication and competence is a priceless resource for the Association.


You will find my annual report elsewhere in this issue. In it, I characterize this Association as a vigorous, healthy organization that receives strong support from its 45,000 members, and enjoys a great deal of credibility and respect among those who direct the affairs of the nation and the armed forces. During my two-year tenure as president, I have attempted to enhance our reputation as an organization that is dedicated to adequate national security and an effective, responsive National Guard.

In the future as in the past, our stature and credibility will be one of our greatest assets as we work to discharge our responsibilities to the nation and to the National Guard. Some of the challenges we'll face already are upon us; others are clearly discernible on the horizon. They include:

- Continuing our impressive recruiting and retention achievements, to attract good people into the Guard in adequate numbers to maintain authorized strengths.
- Obtaining modern equipment in sufficient quantities to elevate Guard combat readiness to the required levels.
- Intensifying our training efforts, to attain increased readiness at the lowest feasible cost.
- Averting any damaging reductions in either force structure or manning authorizations.

Our Association undoubtedly will play a prominent and vital role in dealing with those challenges. I have little doubt that we will attain most or all of our objectives because our goals are worthy and our will is great.

I'm sure I'll feel an occasional twinge of envy as I watch others take up the cudgels in our behalf in the years ahead. But mostly, I'll feel great pride—pride in all that our Association stands for, pride in the kind of leaders it produces so consistently, and, above all, pride in the kind of dedication and personal commitment it inspires amongst those it serves. ♦



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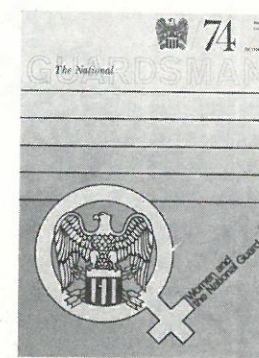
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR / Capt Clinton L. Tennill Jr.

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The increasing involvement of women with the National Guard is symbolized by this month's front cover.

Harriet Daffron, author of "I am a Guard Wife, and I am proud" (see back cover), met her husband, Col Wayne O. Daffron, when he was a private, married him when he was a master sergeant. A teacher by profession, she was born in Kansas and was graduated from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.

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