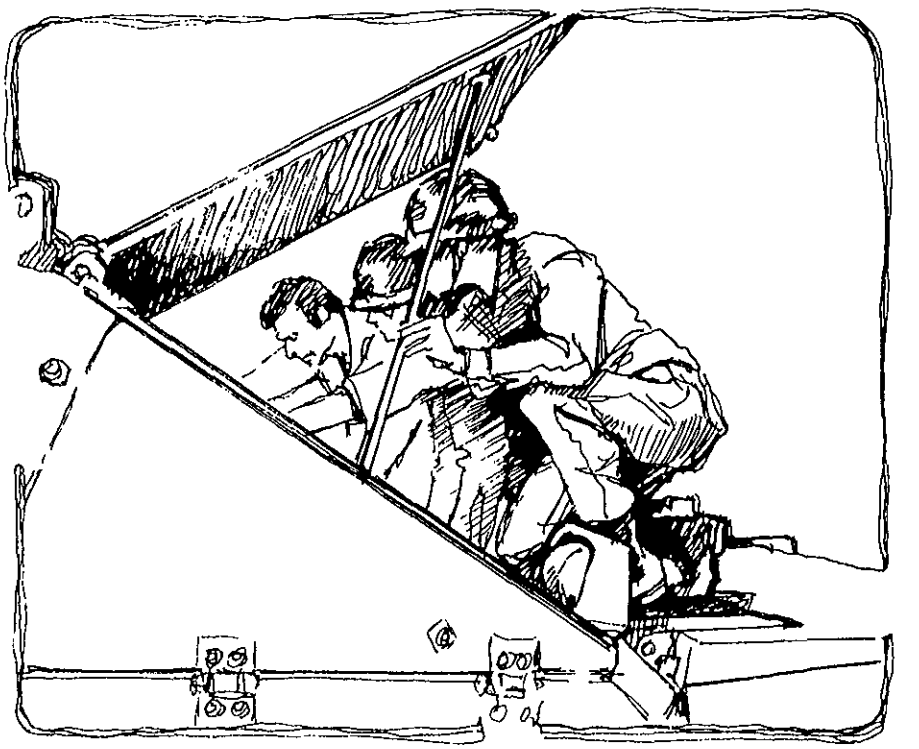
Growing A Leader

forum

DANDRIDGE M. MALONE

Here's how to grow a leader. Find a bright-orange grease pencil. At 1300 hours, after you've marched your squad or platoon down to the motor pool and got them going on the vehicles in preparation for next week's AGI, then go find a jeep, parked in such a way that there isn't any glare on the windshield. With the grease pencil, write four words on the windshield, one under the other, in letters about an inch high: ANALYZE, ORGANIZE, DEPUTIZE, SUPERVISE.

Now, go out among your young soldiers and find an "able and willing" PFC or SP4. Pick one who seems to be pretty much the "main man" in one of those worthwhile little buddy groups that always seem to hang around together. Walk him back toward the jeep. If it's winter, and the jeep's been running, he'll just naturally gravitate toward the hood. Point to those four words. And right there, at that moment, that man begins to change from an "able and willing" soldier to a "willing but unable" leader.



In no more than 30 minutes, there on the hood of the jeep, tell him what each of those words means, and what you know, from experience, about how to *do* each one. Tell him in terms of "task, conditions, and standards." Then, don't just ask him if he understands. That never works very well. Get him to tell you how he would *do* each one. Take 30 minutes. Then take him back to his crew or team and put him "in charge." Go about your business, but keep your eye on him — and on his men.

After you've marched your unit back to the company, and as you release them, fall out your young man. In no more than 15 minutes, tell him how well he met your standards for each of those four words. What he did right and did wrong. Don't give him a lot of words about how to correct the wrongs. Instead, use the most powerful leadership tool you've got: set the example. Tell him to watch you for two or three days, and to be prepared then to explain how *you* do it — how you ANALYZE, ORGANIZE, DEPUTIZE, AND SUPERVISE.

Next time down in the motor pool, or wherever, go ahead and get the unit to work, then fall out the young man again and take him back to the jeep. In no more than 10 minutes this time have him tell you, now that he's watched you do it right, how he's going to do it. Then, put him back "in charge" again. Finally, at the end of the day, take another five minutes for another critique.

And that, my friend, is how to plant a leadership seed. It'll take you

a total of an hour, one good soldier, and a bright-orange grease pencil. And you can do it, right along with everything else you've got to do.

All it takes is an hour's worth of time to take an able and willing soldier and get him started toward becoming an able and willing leader. The next week, he'll be closer to your standards. It'll be time then to start him reading in that new NCO Guide, and watching other good NCOs, and talking with you about all that. And then you can begin delegating to him some of the easy tasks at the bottom of your list of "100 things to do." That will save you hours of your time. You'll get your time investment back, with interest.

And what do you do with the interest? Plow it right back in again. More teaching and more coaching for the one you just got started, or, plant some more seeds. Pretty soon, your young sprouts will become saplings, and then you'll have a performance-based reason for deciding who to promote, or who to get started up into the NCO educational system — up into the "pro" ranks.

The simple motor pool example is the essence of unit-level leadership development across the board. Every "able and willing" soldier in your unit is a potential leader. And the example works, not just with a young soldier starting to become a leader, but with any leader who is able and willing — private, sergeant, or lieutenant.

As his leader, part of your job is to keep him moving up toward the next higher level. Coaching and critiquing will take your time. So will sending him to school. So will standing up for him when he screws up. But that time isn't just time "spent." It's invested, and it will come back to the leadership of your unit with compound interest.

Now go scrounge up a bright-orange grease pencil!

DANDRIDGE M. MALONE, a retired Infantry Colonel, is a prolific writer, having published numerous articles, books, and technical reports. He holds a master's degree in social psychology from Purdue University and has completed several military schools including the Armed Forces Staff College and the U.S. Army War College. In addition to his Infantry leadership assignments, he also served in either staff or faculty assignments at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the U.S. Military Academy, and the U.S. Army War College.

A Cottonbaler

feature

MAJOR DANIEL A. RAYMOND JR.

Nestled in the foothills of the Spessart Rhon Mountains in West Germany is a small kaserne that belongs to the soldiers of the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 7th Infantry. This is no average unit and it contains no average soldiers. They are all "Cottonbalers," descendants of the soldiers who proudly won their nickname at the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812.

I have been assigned to five Army divisions and served with many fine soldiers but never have I met a group of young men who believed so much in their heritage and did so much to live up to the history of the most decorated infantry regiment in the United States Army. Over the course of time I, too, began to feel this unit had its own manifest destiny and became a believer in "Cottonbaler magic." The story of these soldiers should not be left untold.

I am indebted to Theodore Roosevelt and the author of the epic poem "I Am The Infantry," both of whom inspired my thoughts. To the men of the 7th Infantry Regiment, past, present, and future, I dedicate this poem.

I AM A COTTONBALER

Before you stands a damn fine soldier . . . a Cottonbaler, by God! I can be counted on to accomplish any task — any job. I have been in the arena — my face is marred with dust, sweat and blood. I have known the sweet fragrance of freedom for I have paid the price. I am a damn fine soldier . . . a Cottonbaler, by God!

I earned my nickname at Chalmette in the War of