

# CHAIN TRAINING

MAJOR GENERAL JOHN R. GALVIN

It's instructive to go back and look at your own ideas from an earlier time. It's sometimes embarrassing, too — "Is *that* what I really used to think?" It can also be dangerous if, for example, you start congratulating yourself on the great thoughts you had as a young officer.

As an Infantry captain I had the usual "basic load" of ideas, some good and some bad, about what I'd do if I were in charge of the whole dang outfit. One of those ideas made its way into the pages of *INFANTRY* almost twenty years ago (see the May-June 1963 issue, pp. 54-55). The subject was something called "chain training," which meant the use of the unit chain of command in training, with the leaders at each level serving as instructors for their immediate subordinates. There was a way, I thought, to achieve leader development and at the same time to tailor the training to fit the level of the recipient.

Our Army has always emphasized the importance of the chain of command in discipline, esprit, and successful operation in every unit. Further, the Army teaches leadership as well as military doctrine, and in a unit

improving and strengthening Army leadership is as important as presenting classes.

Training could be passed down the chain of command — not all training, but some of it, depending on the subject. In this way you could tailor training to the needs of each soldier, no matter where he fitted into the chain of command. Offensive tactics, for example, ought to be taught in one way to a battalion commander and in quite another way to a squad leader.

Over the years I have tried this approach in various units, and I must admit it has grown somewhat easier to implement in my present job than it was when I was a company commander!

Chain training can begin at any level — even at division, where the division commander conducts training with his immediate subordinates (assistant division commanders, brigade commanders), who then adapt the instruction and present it to the battalion commanders, who in turn see that it is passed all the way down to the soldiers at the end of the chain.

On its way down, the subject of the training is adjusted in the same way an operations order is fitted to each level. Each leader is given only the amount of instruction and the coordinating details he needs to prepare himself and to teach his subordinates the same subject.

I gave a couple of examples in that *INFANTRY* article — examples that have a quaint and antique ring to them now:

*Map reading, field fortifications and first aid are classes scheduled for a given day in garrison. At an opportune time a week ahead, the company commander briefs the platoon leaders on these classes. He points out that while certain other subjects (a new CBR alert class and a practice involving drill) will be in charge of a specific instructor and attended by the whole company, map reading, field fortifications and first aid will be*

chain classes. He tells them the phase to be taught, the important points to be stressed, and what he expects the troops to learn from the classes. He discusses coordinating details: areas, training aids, reference material, times, etc.

The platoon leaders explain to their squad leaders the subjects of the chain classes, the level of instruction required and the coordinating details. A discussion class serves to refresh the squad leaders as necessary, and to bring out the details to be stressed. Rehearsal times are appointed if required. Responsibilities for training aids, supplies, and areas are assigned.

The squad leaders, assisted perhaps by key men in the squads, present the instruction. Platoon leaders supervise, with the emphasis on assistance in planning and coordinating activities before the class takes place, rather than on corrections after the class is over. The class, which was a discussion at the squad leader level and above, is now largely practical work.

## BETTER TRAINING

So much for reminiscing. Since those bygone days, the Battalion Training Management System has revolutionized training, driving out a number of ills and providing for what I consider a magnificent jump in the potential for better training. Chain training follows the principles of that system: it is decentralized, hands-on, and performance-oriented. Most important, it is based on a commander's continual first-hand evaluation of his subordinates. As he works with them, he becomes more and more aware of their capabilities and their shortcomings, and he adjusts his training approach based on his running evaluation.

At each level, the leader trains his immediate subordinates in the selected tasks — individual and collective — that lend themselves to this kind of tailored instruction. Here are some of the ways we have used chain training techniques over the past year:

- In order to involve the CG, the ADCs, and the

brigade-level commanders in MILES, we "suited up" and ran a squad attack and defense exercise, with the CG as squad leader versus the ADC-M as defending fire team leader. We learned that MILES is the greatest.

- Using Dunn-Kempf, half the key leaders (colonels and above) took on the other half. We learned what our lieutenants can get from this simulation.

- The top of the chain spent four hours together in a motor pool, followed by a couple of hours of PLL. We learned a bit more about what operators and first line supervisors are up against.

- All of us spent eight hours working on FM 25-2, with some imported help from the Army Training Board. We got our thinking together on BTMS.

These examples show what we "highers" did and what we learned; the same training was transmitted from level to level down through the division, fitted to the needs at battalion, company, platoon, squad, and soldier levels.

You have to be careful, of course, in evaluating the value and effectiveness of your own pet project, but I think that with command support and interest, we are:

- Learning at the top and all the way down.
- Tailoring the training better.
- Developing a greater sense of team spirit.
- Saving time — or at least, using time the way it should be used.
- Following the good advice of BTMS.

Chain training also fills an important gap — the comparative lack of individual training at levels above battalion. The Army Training Board and some other institutions have been working on this gap and I think some good things will happen soon. Right now I suggest that any echelon chain training is worth a look. You may, in fact, be doing this kind of training under other names and in different ways right now. If not, try it and see if it works for you.

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