

FORUM & FEATURES



Teamwork

DANDRIDGE M. MALONE

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the last in Colonel Malone's series of ten articles on military leadership. The first appeared in our November-December 1981 issue.

About a hundred thousand years ago, when war was first invented, soldiering was pretty simple. Armies were small — maybe ten men. There was one officer, who was usually the biggest, meanest, and hairiest man. There was one uniform: a piece of animal skin; one weapon: a club; one MOS: 11B; one tactic: hand-to-hand, man-to-man. In those days, if the numbers on each side were about equal, what won on that battlefield was SKILL and WILL.

Ten thousand years later, things had changed. Armies were bigger: 100 men now, organized into ten groups of ten men each. There was a chain of command and eleven officers — one leader for each group of ten, plus one (the biggest and meanest) leader of the leaders. There were two more uniform items — foot gear and shields — and two new kinds of weapons — bows and arrows, and long spears carried by men on horses. There were two new MOSs: 13E and 19B.

Tactics were more complicated. The infantrymen still did just about what they had done before, but the cavalrymen, with their long spears and horses, had to coordinate their faster speed with the movement of the



slower infantrymen. And the artillerymen had to learn to shoot their arrows before their infantry and cavalry buddies got going with their clubs and spears in the hand-to-hand business. With that, the two basics of all combat teamwork were born: fire and maneuver.

What won on this newer battlefield was still SKILL and WILL, but with

an added factor — TEAMWORK. And it was discovered, on countless battlefields, that an army of 100 men who could work together as a combined arms team could whip the daylight out of an army of 1,000 men who couldn't.

Ever since that time, as war and weapons have become more complex, TEAMWORK has become more and more the deciding factor on the battlefield. Military history points this out time and time again. That's why, ever since you started learning to be a soldier, someone has stressed how important it is for you, as a leader, to work to build SKILL, WILL, and TEAMWORK. That's why the tenth principle of leadership, which carries with it the wisdom of war, says you must "train your men as a team."

In this discussion on building teamwork, we're going to develop that tenth principle in detail, more than it's ever been developed before in any Army leadership manual. The complexity of the battlefield for which you are preparing, coupled with the fact that you must fight and win outnumbered, make TEAMWORK more important for Army leadership today than it has ever been. For it is in teamwork that we can find that

something extra we will need to win.

Suppose that, through some military magic and a mighty individual training effort, the leadership of your unit had been able to develop, to standards, every single one of the 1,500 individual skills that the unit needs. What would you have? You'd have 169 individuals you could be proud of, but that's about all. If individual skills were the only kind of skills you had, then the company, the unit, would not survive on a battlefield. These individual skills have to be put together.

The business of putting things together is basically what teamwork is. Putting together is the responsibility of the leaders of a unit. Fire team leaders, for instance, put together the individual skills of their soldiers and build a team. Squad leaders put together two fire teams to build a larger team called a squad. Platoon leaders put together four squads and build a larger team called a platoon. And a company commander puts platoons together to build the basic fighting team of the United States Army. That deadly "thing" on the battlefield that we call the company is a combat team. All the parts are put together, functioning smoothly as a whole, as a team, and working at the deadly business of delivering steel.

There are three different kinds of teamwork. What makes the difference is how much the individuals in the teams have to depend on each other, and how much the leaders have to control the actions of the individuals.

The first and simplest kind of teamwork is like a bowling team. Each individual, by himself, does the best he can, then individual scores are added up to determine how well the team did. But there's not much real teamwork involved. The individual bowlers are not dependent on each other, and the team captain has little to do in the way of coordinating and controlling their actions. His main task in this case is to train and motivate individuals. When a unit fires on a rifle range, it functions basically as this kind of a team.

Things get a little more complicated with a relay team in a track meet. Individual skill (speed) is critical, but now each team member must do his task right before the next man can start to do his. Leaders still work to fire up individual performances, but now they concentrate on a specific part of the action and the specific point where the individuals must depend on each other — the handoff of the baton. And if one runner drops the stick, the team loses. There are many examples of this kind of teamwork in a military unit. The mechanic down in the motor pool, for instance,

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must get the commander's quarter-ton running before the commander can get to the field to coordinate and control training.

The third and most complex kind of teamwork is the kind you find on a football team. Every individual is dependent on everyone else. If one soldier, like the center, or one fire team, like the defensive backfield, fails to do the right things at the right time, then that can cause the team as a whole to lose. The leader of this most complex kind of team is also concerned with motivation, but he is more concerned with coordinating and controlling the actions of every single individual. To win, the team as a whole must get it all together. War is not a game, but the best military example of this most complex kind of teamwork takes place on the battlefield. There, the leaders of the unit — the captain, the lieutenants, and the sergeants — put the whole thing together, and it fights.

You have seen, in these three ex-

amples, a common sense principle that you already know: "Different strokes for different folks." This means that you, as a leader, must do different things according to the kind of teamwork involved. If the requirement is for excellence of individual performance, then you should build and control the team by carefully explaining and closely supervising individual training and individual motivation. If the teamwork requirement calls for a sequence of actions to be performed by different individuals, one after the other, then you should build and control the team by concentrating on the specific times and places where one man hands off to the next. Finally, if the teamwork requirement is the one where everyone is dependent on everyone else — and this is the battlefield kind of teamwork — then there is only one way to build and control the team. And you already have a pretty good idea of what this is, don't you?

Your requirement as a leader in this most complicated of the three kinds of teamwork is to control each action of each man so that all the pieces of the action fit together right. To do this, you must control what each man does, how he does it, and when he does it. If you're a squad leader or higher, you've got to be controlling not subordinate individual soldiers, but subordinate teams — what they do, how they do it, and when they do it. And you do this through the chain — through your subordinate leaders. Clear, uncomplicated orders and clear, uncomplicated communications will help; but even with these, there is no way you can watch over and control, constantly, what every man or team does, or how they do it, or when they do it.

There's only one way you can build the kind of control essential for battlefield teamwork, and that is to build that control into the individuals and the teams themselves — internal control. And there's only one way to do that. You do it the same way the football coach does it — DRILL. Practice and critique, practice and critique, practice and critique, over

and over, until individuals and teams learn to control themselves, until they learn where, when, and how they are dependent on one another, and until the individuals and teams learn what each individual and each team must do in order to "get it all together."

Football coaches call these drills scrimmages, and they write them down in play books. Army leaders call these drills collective tasks or battle drills, and they write them down in ARTEP manuals. Coaches who win on the playing field and leaders who

win on the battlefield will tell you the same thing: you must start with good, basic individual skills as a foundation. Coaches say, "run, block, and tackle." Battle leaders say, "move, shoot, and communicate." After that, it's DRILL and DRILL and DRILL, until working together becomes instinctive. Practice does not make perfect. What makes perfect is perfect practice. DRILL.

Basic individual skills, the will to work to get ready, and teamwork drills — that's the only road that

leads to winning teams. Finally, we can lay out another one of those simple, basic formulas of leadership arithmetic: SKILL X WILL X DRILL = KILL.

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Generalship

GENERAL BRUCE C. CLARKE, USA (RETIRED)

The most brilliant generalship is not enough if the people at home and the soldiers in the field do not support it. The battlefield of the next war will be under the daily scrutiny of newspaper and television reporters. The Battle of the Bulge, in which we suffered 80,000 casualties in six weeks, was our last major battle to have escaped that scrutiny.

This means that commanders of all echelons will have to pay attention to how their actions will appear on the television news. Public relations officers will take on a new importance to their commanders. The effect of publicity is demonstrated by the following scene from the Battle of the Bulge:

During the most critical day in the defense of St. Vith in December 1944, I visited several infantry companies at the front. One had lost all of its officers and about 100 of its men. The hard-pressed first sergeant was in command, and I tried to think of

something cheerful to say to him. I am sure I needed someone to say something cheerful to me, too. Finally, I said, "Sergeant, I have good news. General Patton's Third Army has turned toward us and is attacking in our direction."

The first sergeant looked at me and smiled. Then he said, "General, if Georgie is coming, we've got it made." I left with renewed confidence in my men and myself.

I've thought about that for more than 35 years. Why did the mention of Patton promote such confidence in a first sergeant whose situation was even more critical than he knew? What did "Georgie" have that other generals lacked to one degree or another? How many other senior generals in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge could have struck such a spark in the mind of a first sergeant when his name was mentioned on the battlefield? At least part of the explanation is that to that first

sergeant and others like him, Patton had a face — a reputation.

There will be far fewer faceless generals in the next war. Fewer poor actions will be covered up but, at the same time, fewer good actions on the small unit level will be left unnoticed.

Reports of gains, losses, and reversals will be heard daily at home. No longer will a unit have to take heavy losses to obtain a Presidential Unit Citation. Thus, the general who performs important missions with a minimum of casualties will be the "Georgie" of the next war.

This kind of visibility will add a new dimension to generalship. And it is not too early for officers at all levels to plan for it.

GENERAL BRUCE C. CLARKE, a 1925 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, retired in 1962. While on active duty, he commanded one company, two battalions, four brigades or combat commands, two divisions, two corps, one army, and an army group — in peace and in two wars.
