

**“OLD SCHOOL” GUIDE FOR NCOs**

**23 JUNE 1948**

**Personnel**



**NCO Professional Development “Training Aide”**

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
95TH AIR BASE WING (AFMC)  
EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE CALIFORNIA

November 16, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: NCO Professional Development Seminar - "Old School" Lessons

Welcome to the "Old School" lessons portion of the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Seminar. While the term "Old School" has become cliché, in our case it is an important statement of leadership techniques we can all employ in our supervisory duties today. Change is inevitable and vital to improvement, but the same can be said for reverting back to tried and true principles that are timeless in their effectiveness. This block of instruction will highlight what mentoring is really about, NCO's developing subordinates by utilizing ideas and techniques that have been handed down from generation to generation. What motivated subordinates in 1948 will motivate Airmen today and you have the opportunity to obtain knowledge that very few are privileged to learn. By employing the information you will receive today, you will truly be considered an "Old School" leader and your team will thank you for it!

MARK S. BREJCHA, OMSgt, USAF  
Command Chief, 412th Test Wing

ERIC R. JAREN, OMSgt, USAF  
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HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE FLIGHT TEST CENTER (AFMC)  
EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE CALIFORNIA

1 Sep 09

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Disclaimer - *A Guide for Noncommissioned Officers*

The information contained in *A Guide for Noncommissioned Officers*, dated 23 Jun 1948, is for informational and historical purposes only. It is not intended to officially train or develop noncommissioned officers in today's Air Force. The original guide was written by Technical Sergeant D.D. Miller and has since been replaced by Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2618, *The Enlisted Force Structure* (also known as the *Little Brown Book*), and Air Force Pamphlet (AFPAM) 36-2241, *Professional Development Guide*. The current versions of AFI 36-2618 and AFPAM 36-2241 can be located at <http://www.e-publishing.af.mil>.

//signed//  
THOMAS J. ALFORD, Capt, USAF  
Assistant Staff Judge Advocate

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# Notes

August 6, 2009

CMSgt JAREN

The Guide for Noncommissioned Officers, was given to me in June 1948, by the Squadron Commander, as I reported for duty on a new assignment. My first assignment in Alaskan Air Command Headquarters, was as NCOIC of the Top Secret Control branch.

At the time, I was a "Buck" Sergeant.



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HEADQUARTERS & HEADQUARTERS SQUADRON  
ALASKAN AIR COMMAND  
APO 942, c/o PM, Seattle, Wash

23 June 1948

SUBJECT: A Guide For Noncommissioned Officers

TO : All Noncommissioned Officers, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Alaskan Air Command, APO 942, U S Army

1. The attached notes were originally written by Technical Sergeant D. D. Miller (now an officer), Signal Corps, and have been reproduced many times since their original composition. They are intended as a reminder and a guide for all Noncommissioned Officers in the performance of their duties and will be of real value to you if you will make an effort to put them into practice in your daily duties.

2. Serious application of the principles outlined in the attached notes will result in a more successful accomplishment of our assigned mission and certainly improve military discipline and "esprit de corps" in our organization. Your enthusiastic support is enjoined.

*F. A. Drayton, Jr.*  
F. A. DRAYTON, JR.  
Major, USAF  
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1 Incl:  
Guide for Noncommissioned  
Officers

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d. Never permit damage to government, private or personal property. From time to time, you will be entrusted with valuable government property. Take care of it more so than if it were your own.

Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>The term "Soldier" was used to describe enlisted until 20 February 1950. CSAF General Hoyt Vandenberg directed that all enlisted personnel of the Air Force would be called "Airmen" and the directive was put in writing in Air Force Regulation 39-36. Vandenberg directed that all enlisted personnel of the Air Force would be called "Airmen" and the directive was put in writing in Air Force Regulation 39-36. Rest of the Story: The generally accepted story is that General Vandenberg was visiting an AF base and overheard a senior NCO address a group of lower enlisted personnel as "Soldiers" a throwback to the pre-1947 days before the USAF became an independent armed service separating from the US Army. Over time the term Airmen was expanded to include officer ranks.

<sup>2</sup>Non-coms. A noncommissioned officer, abbreviated to NCO or Non-com, is an enlisted military leader.

<sup>3</sup>Charge of Quarters (CQ) was used to describe a duty in which a NCO is to monitor incoming and outgoing traffic into the barracks. It is typically a 24 hour shift with additional duties such as sweeping, mopping, cleaning restrooms and performing security checks every few hours are conducted in conjunction with CQ.

<sup>4</sup>Fatigue as used in this text was not a reference to a uniform, but rather to non-military duties or details (cleaning, digging, etc) which were normally labor intensive. Fatigues were worn for fatigue duty.

<sup>5</sup>A "Garrison" cap, called a "flight cap" today, is a foldable cap with straight sides and a creased or hollow crown sloping to the back where it is parted.

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## RESPONSIBILITY

6. a. A sense of responsibility is essential in a noncommissioned officer. This includes conscientious execution of all orders; the enforcement of all regulations in the spirit as well as the letter. This is what inspires you to carry each mission, no matter how difficult, to its logical conclusion. This invites the trust and confidence of your superior officers and makes of you an invaluable military man.

b. You are responsible for your men and to them. Keep an accurate count of your detail; know how many men are sleeping in your barracks at all times. If you are asked how many men are sleeping in a barracks, which you are responsible for, it should be unnecessary for you to count them. This is part of your duty to assist in accounting for the men.

c. Your responsibility to the men includes protecting their health by seeing that unhygienic conditions do not exist. See that they are provided with suitable clothing for inclement weather. If a detail is held late, make sure that arrangements are made for their food.

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## A GUIDE FOR NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS

### APPEARANCE

1. a. You are the first soldier<sup>i</sup> with whom most of the trainees become associated. Carry yourself with soldierly bearing. Recruits, unconsciously and consciously imitate their instructor. Always be in correct uniform. Wear the uniform completely buttoned at all times, including the raincoat, shirts, pockets, etc. Make shaving a ritual before appearing in a formation or before men in any capacity. Keep hair cut fairly close; if necessary, get a weekly haircut. Pay special attention to fingernails and personal cleanliness; this is an example that cannot be stressed too highly. Have clothing always neatly pressed and clean. (During inclement weather while on the job, it is permissible to wear unpressed slacks; this applies to the non-coms<sup>ii</sup>, but mess sergeant, charge of quarters<sup>iii</sup> and office workers should be neatly dressed at all times). Be careful that all clothing is properly chevroned, including fatigue<sup>iv</sup> clothes. Never wear anything but brown or tan socks with low shoes. Make sure that the field cap is at the proper angle. Wear the garrison<sup>v</sup> cap straight

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and not canted at an angle that is affected by bus drivers and filling station operators. Devote time and effort to shoes and brass. Try to present a well-groomed appearance on all occasions.

b. Wear the uniform with pride and let this pride reflect itself in your carriage and behavior. If a few drinks cause you to forget yourself, try religiously from drinking in uniform. An intoxicated person in civilian dress is just another drunk; but a soldier somehow manages to convey the impression that the Army does nothing but corrupt itself with drink. If a drink is indicated, frequent the places where the clientele is predominantly military. In a soldier bar, one the worse for drink is not so noticeable. Give a lot of thought to this.

### CONDUCT

2. a. Develop a friendly, cooperative relationship, but by no means a familiar one. Do not borrow money from privates or gamble with them. Never drink with privates in the Squadron. Avoid

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c. Encourage organizational pride. Spirit is the thing. Insist that yours is the best outfit, with the best Squadron Commander, best 1st Sergeant, best mess, etc. It is human nature for men in a group to be clannish and loyal if given a reason to believe down deep in their hearts that theirs is a worthwhile group.

d. Loyalty to your country, flag and service is mentioned here not as an afterthought; because the love of those things is taken as a matter of course with unquestioned belief in its existence. We are, however, inclined to regard these things in a too matter-of-fact manner. Give the country, flag and service all you've got for your period of service. Any soldier who has followed our flag in a parade and marched to the music of a band and who has not felt that little tingle of pride somewhere in the region of his spine, does not merit the name of a soldier.

e. Regard the salute as a privilege. Take pride in its execution and teach the men this attitude toward a most important and noticeable manifestation of discipline.

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### **LOYALTY**

5. a. Your first loyalty is to your Squadron Commander and Squadron officers. Protect them at all times. Develop loyalty to all your superiors. Be loyal to your men and they will be loyal to you.

b. Foster Squadron spirit; keep it alive by encouragement of Squadron athletic teams, and members of teams. Attend the athletic contests of your Squadron. It is not too much to ask, that you go to the games one night of the week. The players devote all their spare time to the team.

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b. Suppress any inclination to enter or take part in any discussion that relates to race, creed, or religion. If asked for an opinion, express it in such a manner that will offend no one. A noncommissioned officer can offend and destroy irreparably the liking a respect of a young soldier by an innocent and inadvertent remark concerning a race or religion. Do not remark in any but a complimentary manner on pictures of privates' girlfriends, letters, gifts, etc. Listen to the personal problems of young privates, and try to advise them intelligently.

c. Never resort to ridicule in the treatment of the men under you. Don't nag the men and, above all, never swear at them. Have an air of confidence and decisiveness about you which will bring a spirit of confidence to the men in your charge. Never try to bluff your way out of a predicament; men will

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appreciate an honest statement, or explanation of a lack of knowledge which your experience does not cover. Tell them that you will get the desired information at your first opportunity, and do so. Be firm and just.

d. Accept properly offered advice or suggestions from privates. You may learn something.

e. Learn to give orders in such a manner and voice, that they will inspire the men to do their best. Men instinctively resent instruction and directions given in an arrogant, supercilious, surly or growling manner. This is not conducive to the best results, results that may be obtained if orders are delivered in a reasonably clear, firm, concise, forceful manner.

f. Have the assurance that the men understand what is required of them. Take them into your confidence so that they may see the goal that is to be attained. Do not supervise too closely; allow the men a certain latitude in the performance of their job if the desired results can be obtained as easily and as effectively. Encourage initiative. Use rebuke sparingly but be unstinting in praise for a job well done. Give deserving men credit for a good job.

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discipline. He may not see it. Any infraction of published or oral orders is contrary to discipline. It is your duty to see that they are enforced.

e. At drill, a lot of errors will occur and pass unnoticed by the Squadron Commander and flight leaders. It is your duty to correct them in order to contribute to the smoothness of the drill. Learn thoroughly the basic duties of a private, without which you cannot be an efficient noncommissioned officer.

f. Keep in mind that discipline is the state of training that makes prompt execution of all orders instinctive.

### INITIATIVE

4. a. Initiative in a noncommissioned officer is one of the most important traits he can possess. It is defined as the power of originating something; the self-reliance of energy required to begin or dare new undertakings. In a noncommissioned officer, it merely means that he is resourceful and reliable and that he will react to any given situation in a credible manner. That he will accomplish a mission as

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b. The orderly room does not exist to iron out all trivial breaches. Use the orderly room only in case of flagrant breaches of discipline or conduct contrary to good order. Direct insubordination, insolence or disrespect should be brought to the attention of the 1st Sergeant or Squadron Commander, especially if it occurs in the presence of other men and it is imperative to establish an example for others.

c. Remember, you cannot administer disciplinary punishment yourself, but you can give the offender the alternative of performing extra police duties or explaining this infraction to the Squadron Commander. Be sure he understands that he has this alternative. Constant and repeated reports of derelictions of duty to the orderly room do not mark the non-coms as efficient, but indicates that somewhere he has failed in his attitude toward the men.

d. Develop an impartial attitude toward the men. Should you dislike a man personally, do not take advantage of your position to express this dislike. Do not hesitate to make corrections if they come to your attention. Do not wait for a senior to correct anything that is contrary to good order and

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Make yourself accessible to the men whenever they desire to speak to you on any subject whether duty or personal.

g. Make corrections quietly and firmly. A stinging rebuke can be as brutal as a blow in the face to a sensitive person. Never be the cause of a soldier losing his self-respect; a soldier that has lost his self-respect has lost the personal trait without which he cannot be a good soldier.

h. Avoid smut and filth in your conversation; young soldiers are impressionable, and foul language may capture their imagination. Never indulge in horseplay or shuffling with privates. Loss of face and dignity can result in even the most innocent sparring bout in the barracks or Squadron area. Too, a lot of non-coms, if bested in such a contest, will rely on their rank to regain their loss of face; this gives rise to unfavorable criticism. Confine such activities to the regular authorized sports. Participation in such team games as basketball, baseball, football, volleyball and softball is recommended. Enter such recreational pastimes wholeheartedly for the enjoyment to yourself and the opportunity they afford to become acquainted with

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the men. In such activities, leave your rank aside for the time involved, unless occasion arises where it is necessary for you to use it.

i. Remember, you are a noncommissioned officer of the Army not just the Squadron that you are a member of. Never forget this.

j. In your relationship with officers, always be courteous to the point of leaning over backward. This is an all important example. The men learn from you, so never be slipshod in your treatment of an officer. If you do, you are putting yourself open to reproof and immediately betray a lack of training in your own makeup.

k. When conversing with officers, avoid the use of the personal pronoun when referring to the officer spoken to. Make this habit second nature.

l. For an officer to merely suggest that such is not what it should be is sufficient cause to have it immediately corrected. For example: If an officer remarks that the floor is not as clean as it should be, or that the men are not well versed in military courtesy, etc., this all you need to take immediate

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k. When conversing with officers, avoid the use of the personal pronoun when referring to the officer spoken to. Make this habit second nature.

l. For an officer to merely suggest that such is not what it should be is sufficient cause to have it immediately corrected. For example: If an officer remarks that the floor is not as clean as it should be, or that the men are not well versed in military courtesy, etc., this all you need to take immediate

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steps to see that that condition is remedied.

m. Always be punctilious in your association with officers. If they are friendly with you, do not presume on such an attitude. Give them the respect and courtesy that is their due, but do not be servile or afraid of them. Respect for them is not founded on fear, but mutual cooperation. Above all, be absolutely honest in all your dealings with the officers. If you are wrong, admit it, don't attempt to quibble .

### DISCIPLINE

3. a. Always keep paramount in your mind that obedience is the first and last duty of a soldier. This applies to the soldier, first, last and always. Expect it from the men in the same measure that you give it to your superior. Do not complain about what seems to you to be a burdensome duty. If you complain, how are the men to regard their work when they are the ones who perform the actual labor? Your holiday charge of quarters or non-com of the guard is to tem a privilege rather than a duty in comparison to a holiday kitchen police or fatigue.

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