



CompanyCommand

Building Combat-Ready Teams



To: Company Commanders

From: Company Commanders

Honoring Leaders Who Made a Difference

As we reflect on how we came to be the leaders we are today, we are reminded of our role in developing the leaders of tomorrow. In the June 2007 Company-Command article, we shared the story of Hank Arnold, Steve Delvaux and Steve's lieutenants as a great example of "Third-Generation Leadership."

Leaders with a third-generation perspective develop

their leaders with future generations in mind.

There are thousands of untold "Hank and Steve" stories in our profession. One CC forum member, Jay Miseli, inspired by the article, launched a discussion in the CC forum, telling his own story and asking his fellow professionals, "Who made you the leader you are today?" Listen in as CC members reflect upon this question.

Jay Miseli

C Co & HHC, 2-69 AR, 3 ID

I took my Headquarters Company on a Thursday morning, spent that first day responding to a congressional inquiry and spent Friday getting my arms around admin for this beast (375 Soldiers on the books). That Monday, my mortar platoon was supporting an IOBC (Infantry Officer Basic Course) indirect fire exercise, and I intended to visit them on the range but didn't make it out. That evening, when they returned to the company HQ, the platoon sergeant reported some disturbing news. (The platoon leader was TDY to the Mortar Leader Officer Course at the time.)

The new brigade combat team (BCT) commander, who had been in command about one month at this point, had dropped by the range and wasn't happy with what he saw. The IOBC cadre had directed the platoon to set up their mortars in an open field with no camouflage nets or any cover because the cadre wanted the second lieutenants to see the adjustments occurring. So, the platoon complied (outside of their SOP), and having registered their tubes, were in the middle of a lunch break in a nearby woodline when the BCT commander arrived. Not only was the platoon in, shall we say, a degraded uniform for lunch, but the firing positions were anything but tactical per the previous

request. The BCT commander calmly explained to the platoon sergeant (PSG) that this was a wasted training opportunity and that in our BCT, we never waste an opportunity to prepare for war. They walked through the positions and made some refinements, and then he departed.

Soon after that report from the PSG, my battalion commander called and relayed (again in a calm manner) the same basic story. At this point, I felt like a dirtball, having not gone out there and not really knowing the ap-



CPT Jay Miseli (left), who commanded HHC/2-69 Armor in Operation Iraqi Freedom-1, and his first sergeant, Lonnie Smith, relax after their company's combat-patch ceremony in Baghdad.

propriate standards for mortar firing positions in the first place; I felt certain that this had cemented a negative first impression with the BCT commander.

Four days later, our battalion was doing a run when the BCT commander saw us and decided to join us. He started running with the command group, and then started working his way down the line through the companies, talking for a while with each company commander. When he got to me, I thought, "Here it comes," expecting to get a well-deserved chewing out for Monday's range. Instead, he ran with me for more than 10 minutes, the entire time explaining that his singular focus as BCT commander was wartime readiness, and that if necessary, training and preparing for war would be at the expense of other areas (what he deemed housekeeping). In those 10 minutes, he gave me the clearest guidance I had received as far as priorities go, and for the remainder of my time in Headquarters and Headquarters Company (22 more months, including Operation Iraqi Freedom under his command), I knew, with firsthand knowledge, that my boss expected me to train and prepare for war above all else—and this gave me perfect clarity for focusing my efforts.

I will never forget the power of that experience. I fully expected to get chewed out and treated like an ineffective commanding officer from there onward. Instead, I got a powerful lesson in calm and positive leadership as well as perfectly clear guidance for my number one priority in command. I recall more than a few times when he shielded us from institutional forces that stood counter to this priority, so it wasn't just a statement but a fact of life.

Ryan Kranc

Quickstrike Troop, 4/3 ACR

I was fortunate enough to get paired up with some of the best NCOs the Army has.

My first platoon sergeant, then-SFC, now-SGM Bill Lindsey, was patient enough to teach an eager second lieutenant the technical and tactical aspects of leadership while also teaching me the importance of maintenance, supply accountability and physical fitness. I don't remember a day going by when we didn't run together in the morning for PT less than four miles. He was the first person to teach me what a 5988E was and how to correctly fill it out. He taught me demolitions, breaching and how to command and control a platoon. He was the reason I was a successful engineer platoon leader. SGM Lindsey pinned my 1LT bar on my shoulder.

As an Armor officer, I was blessed to lead a scout platoon with then-SFC, now-1SG Dean Lockhart. His detail-oriented, zero-defect method-

ology in operations, maintenance, supply and training allowed me the time to do my job as a platoon leader. He always showed what right looked like. Even in his worst hour, as he lay bleeding on the side of a Ramadi highway in July 2003, he ensured security was established as he was cared for. First Sergeant Lockhart pinned my captain's bars on my shoulder.

I could go on and on.

The bottom line is that the NCOs are the backbone of the Army. For a young officer, the platoon leader/platoon sergeant relationship sets the tone for the success of the platoon. As you move on, the commander/first sergeant relationship solidifies those common traits and roles with a scope of influence that affects four times as many Soldiers. Both of these men epitomize what an NCO and Soldier should be, and because of that, have been my strongest influences in the Army.

Raul Rovira

HHC, US Army Garrison, Livorno, Italy

It's about time I give credit to the one who built the foundation, my platoon sergeant back then, SFC(P) Jaime Rodriguez. He was a promotable SFC who refused to take a staff job as long as he could be on a tank and with Soldiers.

"SFC Rod" was a stud at PT, maintenance, training, gunnery and tactics. I was his seventh platoon leader, and he trained me and the platoon well. After a few months on the job, every project, operations order, maintenance plan, training event and PT session was our product—PL and PSG together. In the end, the plans and orders were written by me and he just looked them over and gave his two cents, like my personal small group leader. Without my noticing at the time, this was a "crawl-walk-run."

I can honestly say that we were each other's shadow back there in Korea. Other PSGs in the BN would tell me, "I wish I had that tight of a professional relationship with my LT." In some cases, LTs would come to me and say, "I wish I could get one month with your PSG." I was fortunate to



Then-2LT Raul Rovira (right) and his platoon sergeant, then-SFC(P) Jaime Rodriguez, try to smile despite subzero temperature during a platoon field training exercise in Korea.

have him for seven months. I pinned MSG on his hat right as he left the platoon. He remained in the battalion, and we stayed in touch.

About a year later he was “Top Rod,” 1SG Rodriguez, in 3-69 AR at Fort Stewart, Ga. I was a captain by then in the area support battalion. I would look him up for lunch from time to time to continue with the mentorship.

It was a proud moment when I was invited to his graduation ceremony, where I saw him receive his BA a few months before his retirement. He retired as a first sergeant and now lives happily in Florida with his wife and two children.

Pat Schoof

233rd Trans Co (CBT HET)

I have become a leader who believes that, while accomplishing tasks is important, having subordinates who take the mission, make it their own and then execute with proficiency is really more important in most circumstances.

I owe this leadership principle primarily to two leaders in my past. The first was one of my commanders while I was still enlisted and working in an operations position. He allowed me room to maneuver while, at the same time, being there to ensure unit and organizational standards were being met. The other benefit of seeing him in action was the intangible “officership” that he lived. He was always comfortable with the troops, yet he didn’t get too close, so he was always effective in leading the team; he was a professional. Then, my first commander when I was a lieutenant exhibited many of those same characteristics. He led by empowering his subordinates.

Please do not confuse empowering with laissez-faire. The two are completely different. Both of my mentors demanded performance standards that needed to be met or exceeded. They allowed room for error, provided I learned from my mistakes; there were few zero-defect situations.

The vision of third-generation leadership is a noble one. Now a few months out of command, I have received some very positive feedback on the way I approached situations and the way I “trained” lieutenants. Seeing this happen is personally rewarding, since I take great pleasure in seeing people grow. I hope that I can continue to live up to the legacy that was provided to me.

Jon Dunn

K Troop, 3/2 ACR

So many Army leaders made me the leader I am today, but my PSG and CO were most critical and complemen-

tary. I had the fortune of having a great PSG, then-SFC Ronnie Kelley, and two outstanding commanders, then-CPTs Rob Purvis and James Isenhower. From my PSG, I learned how to conduct, inspect and track the maintenance of my equipment, and how to maneuver my platoon. From my commanders, I learned how to plan and resource training (specifically how to run mission-essential task list-based and effective training meetings), property accountability and how to employ the combined-arms team.

We truly are reflections of those we learned under and need to always remember the impact we have on those learning under us.

Jonathan Silk

C Co, 1-72 Armor

I had several years of prior service experience as a light infantry NCO before I was commissioned as an Armor officer. As a light infantry NCO, I did not have a lot of property to be accountable for—just radios, night observance devices and weapons.



Then-CPT Jon Dunn (left) and then-2LT Jonathan Silk stand in front of the bridge at Al Kut the day after their troop's successful counterattack to seize the eastern Iraq city.

As a lieutenant, I was assigned to K Troop, 3/2 ACR. Jon Dunn (Killer 6) was an awesome commander. One way he mentored me was in the area of property accountability. As a cavalry scout platoon leader, I had six gun trucks, all the basic issue items and a bunch of other equipment. Killer 6 ensured that my fellow platoon leaders and I hand-receipted the platoon equipment down to the sections and made sure we did regular inventories and that every piece of equipment was secure and maintained to standard.

Now, as a commander, I enforce the same standards on

accountability of equipment with my platoons as Killer 6 did with me. My PLs consider me an “accountability Nazi,” but they will learn to appreciate—as I did—the value of knowing what you have and having what you need.

Will Richardson

C Co, 2-6 Infantry

“Never forget that no military leader has ever become great without audacity. If the leader is filled with high ambition and if he pursues his aims with audacity and strength of will, he will reach them in spite of all obstacles.”

— Carl von Clausewitz

I had nine years as a cavalry scout NCO before becoming an officer after OCS. Two of the most influential and effective leaders in my career embodied the characteristics mentioned by Clausewitz—audacity and strength of will. Both men demonstrated their strength of will and personal courage to overcome significant obstacles to turn broken organizations into highly effective units in a short period of time before deployments.

My platoon sergeant in Germany had the greatest influence on my initial leadership development. He taught me how to be a leader who cared for but didn’t coddle his Soldiers. He also taught me that anything is possible if your will is stronger than that of anyone else involved. He overcame the toxic staff sergeants who had ruled the platoon, and he proved to his superiors that he could be counted on to live up to his word. The platoon had been known to be poorly disciplined and apt to lose sensitive items in the field. He rigidly enforced equipment accountability by beginning each day in garrison with complete equipment layouts. There was no doubt in our minds that equipment accountability and operability was critical to our mission. The platoon became one of the most disciplined and respected outfits during our deployment to Bosnia in 1995–96, purely through his leadership. He appeared to be too audacious in the field, but we always pulled off the mission. He completely changed the organizational attitude in three months. He set high standards and enforced them continuously. He set seemingly impossible goals and always accomplished them. We were proud and confident. He set the base for my leadership development.

My second battalion commander as an officer changed the organizational attitude of the battalion in roughly the same time it took my platoon sergeant to change a platoon’s. I soon realized that the size of an organization is irrelevant and the strength of

the leader’s will to accomplish his vision is absolute. I could go on for pages detailing the lessons I learned from Panther 6, but the big five were: calm leadership under all circumstances, adherence to fundamentals, constantly learning and studying your trade, knowledge of military history (and especially your organization) and war is a test of wills.

I was honored to witness incredible leadership in action during the initial occupation of the former Yugoslavia and OIF I. It’s incredible to see the words spoken in garrison and training translate to positive actions and results in combat. This brings me to the most important thing I learned from these two leaders—listen to everybody. They always did.

Ray Kimball

F Troop, 3-7 CAV, 3 ID

This is going to sound odd, but it was actually my time on staff that shaped my leadership style more than anything else. Let me explain.

I was a thoroughly mediocre platoon leader. I made some small mistakes and some huge mistakes, but I never really “connected” with the Soldiers and warrants I led. No one will ever look at my platoon time and say, “Wow, that’s what a platoon leader should be.” After 14 months as a PL, I moved up to be the battalion (1-10 Aviation, 10th MTN DIV) S-4, where I would stay for 28 (!) months.

Being in that position, I got to interact with all of the company commanders in the battalion and get a sense of their leadership styles and how they led Soldiers. Working with line commanders like Nick Arata, Jim Nugent and Brian Zarchin, I learned about tactics, operations and how critical it is for leaders at all levels to accurately spell out their strengths and weaknesses. Working with support commanders like Jon Scott Logel, Garner Pogue and Lamar Adams, I learned how logistics enables quality tactics and



MAJ Michael Lundy and LTC Jerry Scott, leaders who made a big impact on Ray Kimball, supervise the Comanche Base flight line during Bosnia’s worst snowstorm in 50 years.

operations. Because I got to look at so many leadership styles in action, I got to pick and choose the ones that best fit the way I wanted to lead. Today, when I talk to cadets about leading Soldiers and the expectations that come with it, I think about those commanders.

My most direct influences in that job were the two amazing executive officers for whom I had the privilege of working, MAJ Joseph Blackburn and MAJ Michael Lundy. Both were tough, skilled leaders with a passion for quality and high standards for good staff work. More important, though, both also had a deep and personal commitment to professionally developing the officers under their leadership. Both of them knew that Aviation officers typically view staff work as a kind of purgatory, keeping them away from the flight line. Both of them did everything they could to counter that perception and show us that not only was our work important for the battalion's mission, but it was also important in preparing us to be future commanders at all levels. I felt a deep sense of personal concern and professional commitment from both men that you just don't always find, and it made a huge difference.

Robert Ritz

C Troop, 8-10 CAV, 4/4ID

CPT Daniel Gade was my commander in D/2/72AR. I hated him. I still hate him. And yet I love him, and if I had to identify a mentor, it would be Dan.

I'll never forget the first words he ever spoke to me. "I don't want you in my (expletive) company!" Even though I was only a platoon leader for four months before moving on to XO of another company, he continued to push me

and, yes, berate me. When the time came for us to deploy from Korea to Iraq for OIF, I was on the verge of "killing" him. Yet he still chose me over all other LTs in the brigade to be his XO.

Then came the day when the IED took him out of the fight. He lost his entire right leg and was given only a 20 percent chance of pulling through. With the hectic pace of assuming command as a young lieutenant—in combat, in Ramadi—I never really sweated it. Working for Dan had been a hell of a lot harder than 20-hour days with two to three patrols all coming into contact. It was then that I realized what he had done. He had challenged me. Given little guidance and told not just to swim but to swim against the current with a full ruck on my back, I had learned from Dan to take care of my men and accept no slack. Dan trained me to lead and succeed in combat.

Dan is still in the Army and was picked up major BZ (below-the-zone). He's currently assigned to the White House on wounded-warrior issues. Throughout his entire ordeal of rehab and constant surgeries, he has still stayed the same old Dan—berating me and pushing me. He continues to mold me and lead me.

Who made an impact on your development as a leader? How are you inspiring and equipping your leaders today so they have the vision and experiences they need to develop their leaders in the future? To share your ideas and experiences and to hear those of other Army officers, participate in the professional forum for Army company commanders at <http://companycommand.army.mil>.

About CompanyCommand

CC is a place for company-level commanders—current, past and future—to connect and share ideas and experiences. This is YOUR forum—it is voluntary, grassroots, by and for company commanders and is focused like a laser beam on CompanyCommand. By joining, you are gaining access to an amazing community of professionals who love Soldiers and are committed to building combat-ready teams. Collectively, as a profession, we possess the knowledge that can enable us to build and lead our units more effectively. With this in mind, please participate, contribute and tap into the experiences of others. You'll never know the full impact of taking a moment to share your experience with others!

Connecting leaders



Art by Jody Harmon

The CC space is organized around Leadership, Warfighting, Training, Fitness, Supply, Maintenance, Force Protection and Soldiers & Family.

We also have an area specifically for Professional Reading, as well as the CDR's Log where commanders are journaling their command experiences. And, if you are preparing for command, we recommend you check out the "1st 90 Days" topic located in the Leadership Section of the web site. If CC is adding value to you, encourage your platoon leaders to check out their forum—a forum that is centered on excellence in platoon leadership—at

<http://platoonleader.army.mil>.

Send article ideas to tony.burgess@us.army.mil.

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