

Assorted Air Force Tidbits

The National Security Act of 1947 became law on July 26, 1947, and created the Department of the Air Force, headed by a Secretary of the Air Force. On September 18, 1947, W. Stuart Symington became Secretary of the Air Force, and on September 26, Gen. Carl A. Spaatz became the USAF's first Chief of Staff. We celebrate September 18th as the Air Force's birthday!

Air Force Mission

To defend the United States through control and exploitation of air and space.

Air Force Vision

Air Force people building the world's most respected air and space force - global power and reach for America.

Air Force Core Values

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Eric W. Benken

Transcript of remarks from the "Core Values" video, which is shown to all airmen attending basic military training.

Integrity, service and excellence. These simple words epitomize the core values of our military profession.

The foundation is integrity, fortified by a commitment to the service of our country, and fueled by a drive in excellence in all that we do. The Air Force recognizes integrity first, service before self, and excellence as its core values. These are values every member must believe in, and more importantly, must live by.

We start with integrity because it is the essential element or the foundation on which other values are built. It's being honest with others as well as with yourself, and doing what's right at all times. Integrity remains the very bedrock of the military profession. Service members possessing integrity will always do what's right, regardless of the circumstances, even when no one is looking. They will make no compromise in being honest in small things as well as great ones.

Next is our military service -- an uncommon profession -- that calls for people with an enduring commitment and dedication to the mission. It requires us to have a sense to service before self. Each member must realize his or her needs are secondary to the needs of our great country. This is a 24-hour-a-day commitment, and one that requires many personal sacrifices. Personal goals are important and often coincide with Air Force goals. However, there is no room for personal agendas that interfere with the needs of the U.S. Air Force or the interests of our government.

This brings us to excellence, our third core value. Military members have been entrusted by all Americans with our nation's security. This encompasses many things, among which is the care of the resources of our nation, the most treasured of which are the lives of those who serve. This makes competence or excellence in all things we do paramount. Doing the very best you can is not just a professional obligation, it's a moral one as well.

Integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all things we do. These core values serve as our road map and set the standard for our behavior. They serve to remind us of the importance of

the profession we have chosen, the oath we took, and the demands placed upon us as members of the profession at arms. Learn these lessons well. They will serve you well in your professional career and your personal life.

“The US Air Force exists for one reason, and one reason alone. That is to fight and win America's wars when called on to do so. That's the only reason we exist as an institution. The Air Force is not a social actions agency. It is not an employment agency. The Air Force Academy does not exist to provide a first-class education to some of the brightest young men and women in America. It exists to produce leaders of our Air Force.” - General (retired) Ronald Fogleman

The Blue Air Force Uniform

As early as 1945, long before the Air Force became an independent service, its leaders were looking at the possibility of obtaining a distinctive new uniform. By 1946 it was clear that it would be some shade of blue. In January 1948, President Truman approved a new uniform for the Air Force, but Congress would not approve the funding. In January 1949, the Air Force and Army addressed the issue again. This time there would be no extra costs. The blue cloth would be introduced as a normal replacement procurement in 1950.

On 18 January 1949, President Truman again approved a distinctive blue uniform for the Air Force. A week later (25 January) the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Hoyt Vandenberg, spread the word that the blue uniform had been approved and would be available for distribution by 1 September 1950.

Why are men's coat buttons on the right? They were placed there for better access to drawing their swords, which were hung on the left side. It was more efficient to place the buttons on the right side so a threatened soldier could reach for his weapon with his fighting hand while his left unbuttoned his garment.

Speaking of buttons, what's the origin of those confounded ornamental buttons on the sleeves of some uniforms? Several sources agree that the original purpose of ornamental buttons was to keep soldiers (or homesick midshipmen on their first cruise) from wiping their noses on the sleeves of their dress uniforms.

The first uniforms that could be called such in the present sense of the word were those fitted for the household troops of Louis XIV (1600's). By 1700 almost all soldiers in Europe wore uniforms. Prior to the seventeenth century, soldiers conformed to the civilian dress of the time and were distinguished only by their military arms and equipment. The armies of the old Roman Empire did not wear a true uniform. They did, however, present a somewhat uniform appearance by virtue of having helmets, body armor, shields and weapons of a more or less standard design.

Did you know commissioned officers wore chevrons long before noncommissioned officers did? Inverted gold chevrons were used by the British Army up until 1830. Their use in the U.S. Army appears to have come into vogue at West Point in 1817. Since 1832, only noncommissioned officers have worn chevrons, except at West Point.

Ever wondered where trouser cuffs came from? Introduced about 75 years ago, the fashion came about out of the wearer's desire to keep his garments out of something messy. For the wrist cuff, this something was food. For the trouser cuff, the offending substance was probably mud. After long years of slogging around with soiled trouser legs, men finally got the bright idea to roll them up and out of the mud. It wasn't until just before World War I the improvisation became a fad and tailors began to sew cuffs in place.

The first "clothing allowance" probably went to recruits in 15th century England who were given an allowance for "coat money" (in addition to the "conduct money" to cover their travel to join their units).

The oldest uniforms still in existence are those worn by the Papal Guard of the Vatican (said to have been designed by Michelangelo) and those of the "Yeomen of the Guard" raised by Henry VII in 1485 (the "Beefeaters" of the royal guard today).

Salutes

Nothing is more embedded in the military culture than saluting. All services teach this in their basic officer and enlisted training programs, and it is reinforced throughout the service member's career.

No one knows for sure the origin of the hand salute. Many references point to the knight's symbolic gesture of raising his visor to reveal his identity as a courtesy on the approach of a superior as its origin. We do know that from earliest times, the right (weapon) hand has been raised as a greeting of friendship. The origin of our hand salute may derive from the long established custom for juniors to remove their headgear in the presence of superiors. In the



British Army as late as the American Revolution a soldier saluted by removing his hat. As the British soldier's hat became more cumbersome, the act of removing the hat degenerated into a gesture of grasping the visor. The following entry in the "Order Book of the Coldstream Guards," dated 3 September 1745, supports this view: "The men ordered not to pull off their hats when they pass an officer, or to speak to them, but only to clap up their hands to their hats and bow as they pass." Over the years the practice evolved into something like our modern hand salute.

No matter what its origins, the hand salute today, while it varies across the globe, says in effect "I greet you." Returning the salute says in turn "I return your greeting." The gesture is always friendly and rendered cheerfully and willingly. It is rendered with pride and as a recognition and sign of respect between comrades in the honorable profession of arms.

Why Silver "Ranks" Gold

At the start of the American Revolution, officers in the Continental Army wore no rank insignia; it soon became apparent that some means of identifying the officers was required. As an expedient, field officers were ordered to wear red cockades (ornaments or rosettes) on their hats, captains wore yellow or buff and lieutenants were provided with cockades of green. In 1782 Washington implemented a system where epaulettes would be worn by officers as indicators of rank: major generals wore epaulettes with two stars on each shoulder, brigadier generals epaulettes with one star on each shoulder, field graders a plain gold epaulette on each shoulder, captains wore a single epaulette on the right shoulder, and subalterns wore one on the left.

In 1821 this practice was abolished in favor of using chevrons to denote rank. Chevrons for officer rank did not last long (except at West Point, where they're still used today to designate cadet officer rank), and in 1832 epaulettes came back. (This was also when the spread eagle was adopted as the insignia for full colonels.) Infantry officers wore silver epaulettes; all others wore gold. For example, an infantry colonel wore a gold eagle on his silver epaulette, and all other colonels wore silver eagles on gold.

In 1836 the shoulder strap replaced the epaulette on field uniforms. It had a border of silver or gold depending on the color of the epaulette it replaced. The leaf and bars appeared at

this time, but the colors were not fixed—officers wore gold insignia on silver-bordered shoulder straps and vice versa. In 1851 all epaulettes and shoulder strap borders became gold and the insignia on the epaulettes were silver. Majors and second lieutenants wore no rank insignia—they were distinguished only by the type of fringe on their epaulettes. Rank insignia on shoulder straps were silver for all officers down to and including lieutenant colonels; captains and first lieutenants wore gold insignia.

When epaulettes were abolished in 1872 and replaced with shoulder knots, which had no fringe, it was necessary to devise some insignia to distinguish the majors from second lieutenants. So the gold leaf was adopted to denote majors, and that's why lieutenant colonels wear silver leaves and majors gold. At the same time the color of the bars for junior officers was changed to silver. The second lieutenant still wore no insignia, and was only distinguished by the shoulder strap or knot.

Finally, in 1917 the second lieutenant got some "respect" and the Army decided to adopt a new insignia for him. The plan called for the least disruption to other rank insignia, so it was decided to follow the color precedent established in devising major's insignia and adopt the gold bar for the second lieutenant.

Why is silver, rather than gold, used for higher ranking officers insignia? Because the "gold" was actually brass, a less expensive metal than silver.

Military Rank

A Lieutenant General outranks a Major General, but a Major outranks a Lieutenant. Why is this?

This and other anomalies trace back to the fact that both the U.S. Army's organization and rank structure were adopted by the revolutionary colonists from their European mentors, who, in turn, adopted their military designations from the concepts and language of the Romans. Tracing back to historic beginnings of the commissioned scale, the word "Lieutenant," through French from two Latin words (*locum teneris*), is a phrase which means "holding in place of." Thus a lieutenant acts in the absence of a "Captain."

At one time a "Captain" and "Colonel" ranked equal within emerging European armies of the 17th and 18th centuries. Both ranks headed bodies or columns of troops on the march; *caput*, for "Captain", in Latin means "head" of a body, while *columna* describes "column" of troops, which spawned our word "Colonel."

Not until the 18th Century did the rigid distinction between captain and colonel come into being. Organizationally, by that time, two different sizes of troop bodies existed--the captain headed the smaller company-sized unit, while the colonel commanded a group of companies formed together into a regiment.

With regiments expanding to 10 companies, a lieutenant colonel's rank emerged. He not only served in lieu of the colonel but was needed to command the left of the regimental line of a 10-company front. In other words, the colonel's span of command required a lieutenant colonel because the 10-company front often extended beyond the bugle calls and the signals of the flag, both of which were always regulated by the colonel.

Between the captain and the colonel was the "Major", a rank of French/Latin origin, which indicated a higher degree of authority than the rank of captain, since "Major", deriving from the word *magnus* means "something greater" than a captain.

Before 1900, the major's job in the U.S. Army seldom entailed authority over a body of troops on the march; in camp, he remained a staff officer, the tactical expert, and troop trainer.

When the battalion structure was superimposed on a 12-company regiment, a major often had command of this unit. However, apart from the question of authority, somehow in its passage from its Latin origins the one-time adjective "Major" became a noun standing for authority, as "Sergeant" or "General." In fact, there once was a rank in Europe of "Sergeant-Major-General" which eventually lost the word sergeant.

In the United States "Sergeant" is found only in the noncommissioned ranks, but its meaning has to be explained to shed light on the ascending commissioned ranks. "Sergeant" in classical language may have been a lawyer's term, coming from *servientumor serviens ad legem*, "serving at law." Shortened and used as a noun, it meant server or servant. When hyphenated with "Major," the military rank expands to mean "bigger servant or server" and further expands to the better server of the "General" when the latter title is added.

With the word "General" introduced, we can begin to understand why a Lieutenant General came to outrank a Major (Sergeant) General at a time when organizations of greater size came into being. Simply stated, the concept is that a lieutenant general acts in the absence of a "full" general; and the major general is the principal *servientum* to the "full" general. Eventually, a third hyphenated general officer rank of brigadier general was created to command a brigade, when this size of unit was needed to control the march or camp of several regiments.

With the advent of the 19th Century's combined armed teams, infantry, cavalry, and artillery arms, with supporting technical services and administrative units, and the consequent emergence of Divisions, Corps, and Field Armies, the rank of "General" with its several meanings and its various uses in combination with other ranks became strongly associated with these higher commands.

"General" or *generalis* relates to the Latin *genus*, meaning kind, origin, birth, or whole. It early took on a class distinction denoting a patrician of high birth. By medieval times, the adjective "general" was widely used in conjunction with legal, religious, military, or political terminology. "Attorney-general," for example, implied that the official in question was of superior rank and had wider and greater sphere of authority in his field than any other lawyer. The "General Officer" in the military area was superior in authority to other military officers. By 1700, the title "General Officer" was shortened to "General," without losing the meaning of "final or full" authority. Today it continues to cap the hierarchy of rank in the United States forces.

American Military Decorations



The U.S. was very slow in establishing a system of military decorations. The first American decoration was developed by George Washington in 1782 when he had the "purple heart" created. It was to be awarded for "singularly meritorious action" and consisted of a small purple cloth heart to be worn over the left breast. Three were awarded in 1783, but records show no others since then.

In December of 1861, Senator James W. Grimes of Iowa introduced a bill that resulted in the establishment of a Medal of Honor for Navy enlisted men. This is the first decoration formally authorized by the American government to be worn as a badge of honor. The Army followed suit in 1862, and officers were declared eligible for the medal in 1863.

The criteria for presenting the Medal of Honor were very much lower in our early wars than they are now. It wasn't until 1902 that steps were taken to establish lesser awards. The Distinguished Service Cross was established in 1918 for "extraordinary heroism in military

operations against an armed enemy" under circumstances not deserving award of the Medal of Honor. Between the World Wars, a "pyramid" of fifteen distinct awards for valor and merit was established, with the Medal of Honor on top. Campaign medals and their ribbons were not authorized until 1905.

Some little known, but interesting facts concerning the Medal of Honor:

- Five men have won two Medals of Honor. In 1918 the regulations were changed to prevent any one person getting it more than once.
- Although awarded "In the name of Congress," this decoration is properly known as the "Medal of Honor," not the "Congressional Medal of Honor."
- Former soldiers and airmen who have won the Medal of Honor are entitled to an annual pension of \$120 on reaching the age of 65.
- There is no basis in fact that enlisted men holding the Medal of Honor are entitled to a salute from officers. Although it is customary for the junior to initiate the exchange of salutes, it is completely proper for the superior to salute first. It's possible that after some commanding officer saluted a Medal of Honor winner, the word got around that this was expected of all other officers in the command.

RHIP (Rank Hath Its Privileges).

RHIP refers specifically to those special courtesies which persons of junior rank or status extend to their "seniors." When you extend a verbal courtesy (such as "Sir") or physical courtesy (such as a salute) to a senior, you are not just acknowledging that senior's service longevity or age; you're also acknowledging a privilege the senior has earned and therefore has a right to expect from you. It is an acknowledgment of authority; it is also an acknowledgment of respect that reflects positively on both you and that senior. Rank of course has its obligations - not the least of which is to see that one's subordinates' rights are respected; and that they get the privileges they deserve.

High Flight, by John Gillespie Magee, Jr. (written on 3 Sep 41)

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silver wings;
Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds-and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hovering there
I've chased the shouting wind along and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace,
where never lark, or ever eagle flew;
and while, with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God

Magee was born in Shanghai, China, of missionary parents -- an American father and an English mother, and spoke Chinese before English. He was educated at Rugby school in England and at Avon Old Farms School in Connecticut. He won a Scholarship to Yale, but instead joined

the Royal Canadian Air Force in late 1940, trained in Canada, and was sent to Britain. He flew in a Spitfire squadron and was killed on a routine training mission on December 11, 1941. The sonnet above was sent to his parents written on the back of a letter, which said, "I am enclosing a verse I wrote the other day. It started at 30,000 feet, and was finished soon after I landed." He also wrote of his course ending soon and of his then going on operations, and added, "I think we are very lucky as we shall just be in time for the autumn blitzes (which are certain to come)."

The Air Force Song, by Robert Crawford

Off we go into the wild blue yonder,
Climbing high into the sun;
Here they come zooming to meet our thunder,
At 'em boys, give 'er the gun!
Down we dive spouting our flame from under
Off with one helluva roar!
We live in fame or go down in flame, hey!
Nothing'll stop the U.S. Air Force!

Minds of men fashioned a crate of thunder,
Sent it high into the blue;
Hands of men blasted the world asunder;
How they lived God only knew!
Souls of men dreaming of skies to conquer
Gave us wings, ever to soar!
With scouts before and bombers galore, hey!
Nothing'll stop the U.S. Air Force!

Here's a toast to the host
Of those who love the vastness of the sky,
To a friend we will send a message of his brother men who fly
We drink to those who gave their all of old,
Then down we roar to score the rainbow's pot of gold
A toast to the host of men we boast, the U.S. Air Force!

Off we go into the wild sky yonder,
Keep the wings level and true.
If you'd live to be a gray-haired wonder
Keep the nose out of the blue!
Flying men guarding our nation's border,
We'll be there, followed by more.
In echelon we carry on, hey!
Nothing'll stop the U.S. Air Force!