

# Leadership and the Signal Corps

by Maj. Art Maxwell

In 1899, during the Philippine Insurrection, 1st. Lt. Charles E. Kilbourne of the Volunteer Signal Corps won this nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor. Kilbourne's Signal company was supporting a brigade in the suburb of Paco when a major communications link between the brigade headquarters, the direct fire artillery and the forward infantry positions at Paco Bridge was severed by intense gunfire. Kilbourne raced through the withering fire and, as his citation reads:

Within a range of 250 yards of the enemy and in the face of rapid bridge and, in full view of the enemy, coolly and carefully repaired a broken telegraph wire, thereby establishing telegraphic communication to the front.

This act of heroism epitomizes the Be-Know-Do qualities of the leaders in the Signal Corps. This year we in the Signal Corps have the opportunity to revitalize and reemphasize these qualities in support of our 125th Anniversary and the 1985 Army theme: LEADERSHIP. The Secretary of the Army, John Marsh, and the Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. John Wickham, have challenged the Army to improve the leadership command climate of each organization, enhance the leadership development process and institutionalize the mentoring/teaching process. The purpose of the leadership theme challenges us as leaders to develop the full potential of leadership in the Army and to strengthen the competence, commitment, candor and courage of both the leader and the follower. This is certainly not an easy task; however, its accomplishment will result in soldiers and units capable of fighting and winning on the AirLand Battlefield.

It must be recognized that this year's theme only emphasizes something each of us does on a daily basis. Leadership is not something that can be restricted to a specified time but rather is a continuous part of every task we undertake. Each one of us must be committed to the professional Army ethic and possess professional character traits; we each must know ourselves, human nature, our job and our unit; and we must do those things necessary to accomplish the mission by providing direction, implementing plans and motivating our subordinates.

At Fort Gordon the process of developing our leaders occurs at every level. Our units' standards are tough but fair, and we challenge each soldier to aspire to the high qualities of leadership in today's Signal Corps. In the Communications-Electronics Leadership Department (CELD) the education process is structured with up to 49 hours of instruction dedicated to leadership discussion. This time does not include the aspects of leadership that are inherent in every phase of the department's various POIs. Additionally, each course provides the officers, warrants and NCOs a practical application to leadership through PEs, ETXs, and leadership positions.

However, this is only one part of the total effort of leadership. In this "Year of Army Leadership," there are many specific initiatives that will highlight the chain of command's commitment to the soldiers and families of the post. Some of these initiatives include articles in post-wide publications; a guest speaker program; family awareness workshops; a contest of the soldier's knowledge of the new FM 22-100, "Leadership"; upgrade of morale, welfare and recreation facilities; development of a leadership reaction course and a light leader's course; senior, mid and junior level seminars on leadership; professional reading program for the senior/mid level

leaders; platoon leaders workshop on "footlocker" counseling; a commanders' workshop on being a coach or mentor; trips to historical battlefields; a monthly tape produced by the commandant and/or post CSM on leadership; and many other programs that put leadership in the forefront. The Signal Corps will also sponsor the Branch Leaders Award for the lieutenant who demonstrates the highest leadership potential throughout the Corps. Additionally, this year's CONTACT Conference will support the theme of Leadership and how it ties into technology, and the celebration in June of the 125th Anniversary of the Signal Corps will serve to focus the attention of the entire community on this vital theme.

As is readily apparent, the plate is full at Fort Gordon. The challenge for each one of us in the Signal Corps is to act in ways that make our organizations healthy for the development of our subordinates. Each one of us are mentors or teachers of our followers. It is incumbent upon us to create a climate in which leadership can grow and develop. This is our challenge. Let's make our 125th Anniversary year one in which we all can do our part in the development of the Corps' future leaders.