

Preface

Shortly after I was sworn into office by the 18th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in October 2011, the Chairman and I met for a discussion about the Profession of Arms—a topic important to any of us who honorably wear the cloth of the Nation. For quite some time before that, I had longed for a way to capture what our nation’s noncommissioned officer corps is all about: why they are so trusted and empowered, the professional commitment to help achieve our nation’s objectives, and the moral obligation to care for America’s sons and daughters who serve in uniform. By the end of the conversation, we agreed that writing a book about the Armed Forces noncommissioned officer and petty officer was not only the right idea but also, perhaps even more compelling, long overdue. The basic concept was to produce a book of, by, and for noncommissioned officers and petty officers.

On December 17, 1777, General George Washington’s army returned to winter quarters in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, tired and with little strategic success in their fight against the professional British army. This period in Valley Forge proved critical for the fledgling army. General Washington recruited a former Prussian officer, Baron Friedrich Wilhelm Von Steuben, as Inspector General to strengthen the professionalism of the colonial army. Von Steuben’s training objectives constituted the first written plan for standards, discipline, and duty for Washington’s army, and he initiated the first training manual that outlined the duties and responsibilities of the noncommissioned officer. So in an important way, December 17 is considered the birthdate of America’s noncommissioned officer corps.

To accomplish this rather huge endeavor, I assembled a select group of enlisted leaders, representing the five military Service branches,

National Guard, and special operations forces as the primary writing team. Managed by two co-leaders, this writing team was entrusted with a charge: to write a book that holistically defines the nature and calling of the U.S. Armed Forces noncommissioned officer and petty officer. Grounded in the Profession of Arms and distinctive in its own right, this book complements the Department of Defense's *The Armed Forces Officer*, as well as the Services' noncommissioned officer and petty officer doctrinal manuals. The writing team was charged to make certain that their work accurately captures the attributes and competencies of noncommissioned officers and petty officers across all Service branches through the lenses of both war and peace. It is not a "how to" or instructional manual. Rather, it is focused on defining and characterizing the noncommissioned officer and petty officer.

Teamwork is a bedrock operating principle from the first day of our military life cycle. The team of writers (listed in the acknowledgments) worked seamlessly to produce an inspiring book about who we are, what we do, and why we do it. They remained mindful of the differing Service cultures and identities, and they sought to avoid an inadvertent dilution of any particular Service's expectations or standards. Because the Navy and Coast Guard use the term *petty officer* rather than *non-commissioned officer*, the authors made a conscious decision to conjoin the terms and use the initialism *NCO/PO* in order to reflect the proud heritage of these enlisted leaders and their Service cultures.

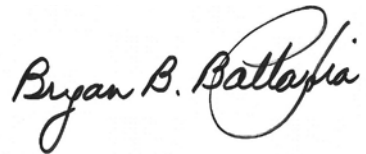
This book seeks to inspire, validate, and ultimately resonate with every Soldier, Marine, Sailor, Airman, and Coastguardsman—past, present, and future. It aims to pay appropriate tribute to the contributions of NCOs/POs in each branch of the Armed Forces.

All of us who were involved in producing this book hope that it finds a spot on your nightstand, qualifies for a place on a commander's reading list, and becomes a standard text for the various enlisted leadership academies. We want the book to serve as a working tool to renew our commitment to our profession. We would like it to be read not only by serving and former NCOs/POs but also by all junior enlisted aspiring to become enlisted leaders. We would like it to be digested by our officer corps so that they may fully recognize what our enlisted leaders bring to the units and organizations in which they serve. We hope our military veterans will treasure this book as they look back

with pride on their own service to the Nation. Finally, we hope that our comrades in arms in other nations, who are an important part of our history, will likewise benefit from reading this book.

As I reflect on all that our Servicemembers do in the defense of the Nation, I am extremely humbled by their dedication to duty and their sacrifice. These patriots, whom I have served alongside—and served—during my career, obligate themselves to lead, motivate, develop, and achieve.

As you read this book, I believe you will see that it encapsulates why our noncommissioned officers and petty officers still proudly carry the torch as the Backbone of our Armed Forces.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan B. Battaglia". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping flourish at the end of the name.

—Bryan B. Battaglia

*Sergeant Major, U.S. Marines
Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman
of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*