



ROYAL AIR FORCE.

GUIDE
TO
SERVICE



NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

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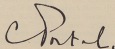
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FOREWORD

This short guide is an excellent statement of those ideas which all in the R.A.F. must keep before them if we are to play our part in winning the war. I hope that all non-commissioned officers will not only read it and digest it, but turn to it time and time again for inspiration.

Never before have we had so great a need for high principles, unflagging courage and stern resolution to carry us through to victory and to preserve all that we hold dear.



Chief of the Air Staff.

*Air Ministry,
July, 1942.*

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SECTION I

SPIRIT OF SERVICE

"A soldier is a member of a clan islanded amid great seas of peril and death, and he acquires a loyalty to his colleagues closer than the ties of kinship."—JOHN BUCHAN.

The Call.

A very wise man who accepted the task of writing the history of the Royal Air Force during the war of 1914-18 noticed that courage and devotion were the rule not the exception in our service. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote: "The last word of wonder and reverence must be kept for the splendid grain of the stuff that was given them (the builders of the R.A.F.) to use in the architecture of success." They were ordinary men endowed with the British heritage and a love of adventure who swelled the ranks of the Royal Air Force.

The Standard.

From the time of its inception members of the Royal Air Force have built up what

Sir Walter Raleigh called "the temper of the air," which is compounded of chivalry, initiative and the ability to concentrate one's whole powers instantaneously to meet a fresh situation. Just as long combat with the turbulent forces of the seven seas gives to our sailor men a true concept of values in life, so also our air crews subconsciously derive inspiration from contact with the vast illimitable spaces of the upper air. Their exploits tend to fix the standard of fidelity, endurance, originality and enthusiasm which infects the whole Service, stirring to vigilance and tireless zeal that multitude of men without whose practical skill and faithful work their deeds are impossible. No doubt because they concentrate so completely on the job in hand as to be oblivious of personal reactions, really brave men seldom talk of their bravest acts; and thus we have come to accept amazing feats of courage as all in the day's work.

Altruistic.

Crystal clear from the history of the pioneers of the Royal Air Force during the war of

1914-18 stands out the guiding principle, "What can I give to improve the Service?" not, "What can I get out of it?" In unstinted measure they gave their skill, their lives to the country's cause and fired the imagination by their glorious deeds. They knew the lasting joy that hides in "nameless unremembered acts" of human kindness.

Comradeship.

The changing needs of peace time sifted the hollowness of self-seekers and strengthened in the small band that remained a deep feeling of brotherhood, because from air-craftman to Air Council, all were conscious of doing some kind of research work. New outposts of Empire were given them to guard—Sudan, Trans-Jordan, Irak, Aden—where untried conditions in desert places refined as by fire their ingenuity and annealed the sense of corporate unity.

Fidelity to an Ideal.

Thus, in a period when most men sought the greatest monetary reward for the smallest effort our air crews blazed the trail over

uncharted expanses of land and sea, and our ground personnel oftentimes remote from machinery's aid applied accurate craftsmanship in maintaining their aeroplanes, flying boats and armoured vehicles serviceable for all emergencies. In distant desert places the Royal Air Force learned by experience that everything worth while in the world demands some service in return.

Grit and Endurance.

Since the present war began abundant evidence has proved the existence of a renewed spirit of cohesion and endurance, of infectious joy in service. Ground personnel equally with air crews by superhuman effort have overcome the impressive strength of the enemy—the few stoutly holding the pass protecting the many. The sublime heroism of our population is answered by the grim determination of all ranks to banish monotony and the boredom of routine, to keep alert and dynamic and thus to lend their united weight in ridding the earth of the tyrants who try to force a fantastic creed upon mankind.

Self-reliance.

On lonely vigil over the seas and long expeditions over enemy territory, in the cold fury of air-combat, in the work of ground staff, the need for intelligent co-operation and self-reliance is made manifest to officers and men who work together as a unity; and no member will let the others down.

Response.

Those among us who have watched the Royal Air Force grow for a quarter of a century recognise how greatly the non-commissioned officers have contributed to its success by their pride in service, by integrity of character, by swift evaluation of new developments. The high standard of efficiency has been founded upon "the ancient and majestic powers of man, the power of his mind over his body, and the power of duty over his mind."

First Duty.

Every non-commissioned officer should realise that efficiency and enthusiasm are inseparable: their first duty is to encourage both qualities in all circumstances.

The Way of the British.

While eager to deserve the trust and respect of his comrades-in-arms each non-commissioned officer should cultivate the spark of humour that pricks the bubbles of misfortune or pompousness. Whatever the nature of his employment the "three R's" retain a constant value: (1) Reliability, which gives strength and accuracy in every part of the war machine; (2) Resourcefulness, necessary in a mobile force; and (3) Rapid mental reaction when emergency arises.

The Cause.

When the enemy announced "For fifty years we have been out to destroy England, and this time we are leaving nothing to chance," he simplified the issue for us all. He was unaware that our people have always displayed a type of courage that holds fast even when no one is watching; nor did he then know our reaction to his threat. Men and women of Britain and the Empire have been roused to implacable wrath and our reactions are demonstrated to the world. Our hatred

and contempt for the Nazi creed is welded into a fierce resolution to wipe its name out of human memory. To this end we must remember that a man fights best for the thing he loves.

The Aim.

For Cromwell's principle of selecting his New Model Army is still fundamentally true to-day—"I will have men of conscience who know the cause for which they fight, and love the thing they know." We who serve in the Royal Air Force know that upon our prowess and efficiency depends the whole future of the civilized world.

SECTION II

DISCIPLINE

Definition.

Discipline in its true sense is the training of one's mental, moral and physical powers by instruction and exercise. It is a necessary attribute to the success of a fighting force, and, if properly understood, it need be irksome to no one. There are two aspects of it: firstly, a form of control imposed on a man from within himself, and secondly, a regulation of his actions imposed by authority. When the course of these two coincides a man is content in his service; but if the two aspects should clash the airman must obey the second, thus ensuring a uniformity of action among a multitude of men whose force can be used with maximum effect.

Basic Requirements.

After having been tested thoroughly in war and peace, a standard of discipline has been established in the Royal Air Force that you

must be careful to preserve unimpaired. Three positive lines of conduct are thus required from you: learn the regulations, study the tradition, and set an example that others will wish to follow.

Obedience.

The vast structure of the Service stands on a foundation of obedience, which while recognising the use of intelligence, claims immediate and complete response. As non-commissioned officers you occupy in the structure a pivotal position wherein your deeds appear before the sight of all men. Diligently avoid giving grounds for criticism.

A.—SELF-DISCIPLINE

Punctuality.

Consider punctuality as a habit of mind and apply it in routine matters to save men's time, to foster efficiency, to banish boredom. Only dictators may relax this rule—but they keep a world waiting.

Dress and Bearing.

When wearing uniform or equipment, set an example of precision and cleanliness to your subordinates whom you might have occasion to reprove for neglect of dress regulations. Carry the head erect and let the body move with the easy control of an athlete and look all men fearlessly in the eyes. This alert bearing may result in recruiting for the Service another good man.

Physical Fitness.

Experience proves that a member of an air crew below par needs more oxygen than his colleagues in better training. He requires oxygen at lower altitudes and in larger measure than others in the aircraft, and he might thereby deprive them of their due share with serious results. An unfit man succumbs to hardship quicker than his more fit comrades: his moral force and will power

are less and he will become a burden on them in any hazardous undertaking. Besides this, sound physical fitness goes a long way towards minimising hardship, fear of the unknown and the irritations inherent in community living. Therefore keep a watchful eye on the men in your care, and give timely warning to a delinquent. Any behaviour which renders a man unfit to perform his duty cannot be tolerated.

Reminder.

It is sometimes forgotten that an offence by a non-commissioned officer is more serious than the same offence committed by an aircraftman.

Moderation and Restraint.

Be moderate in the use of food, stimulants, tobacco or unprofitable amusement. In these days of active warfare a clogged liver or a murky brain are no longer a man's own funeral; they are apt to be the cause of other funerals and much suffering to innocent parties. Restrain any desire to criticise adversely either the regulations or your superiors; your remarks may have unforeseen and unintended results, and may call in question your own power of discernment.

Sterling Worth.

Most of the men recruited into the ranks of the Royal Air Force are eager to apply their skill in a trade or as air crew towards helping the progress of the war. They should be encouraged; on such men bullying, sarcasm or nagging have a bad effect. A non-commissioned officer supports his authority best by the exercise of moral force and trust in his character and efficiency; behind him, but well in the background, is the power of the Air Force Act. These intangibles far outweigh any problematic gain from servile flattery, or from timidity masquerading as strength. Any effort to canvass popular esteem, throws discredit on that man's worth.

N.C.O./air crews occasionally undergo an exacting strain in carrying out their duties. At such times good team work becomes of the utmost importance. Each member of the crew needs to cultivate an indomitable spirit by whose strength he can subjugate not only the enemy, but also his own frailties when facing elemental forces. Reports coming in daily testify how nobly air crews stand up to such exceptional hazards.

B.—COLLECTIVE DISCIPLINE

Drill.

Upon non-commissioned officers falls the special duty of keeping men in good training in drill as a necessary means of quick and orderly movement. When parties of air-craftsmen are marched to and from work with the same precision as on parade then their self-esteem is unassailable and the unit boasts a high tone of discipline which spreads much further than the parties concerned. From any large body of men on parade is required in war time the same steadiness as on a ceremonial parade in peace time; slackness in this respect must be instantly checked.

Orderliness.

In workshops, stores and offices non-commissioned officers must aim at the same awareness as in drill, by means of mental concentration of the men at work and efficient layout of the premises. By using practical commonsense and giving careful attention to detail you may reduce frustration or ill temper and improve the work in your section. Quarters will be comfortable only

when they are kept clean and tidy; where possible, this should be done at small cost in time and energy—but it must be done.

Loyalty and Respect.

The dangers and trials of war test collective discipline at many points, but loyalty is liable to suffer to a particular degree in a protracted campaign. By every means in your power cultivate loyalty to the unit and to the Service, both in your personal reactions and in those of your subordinates. Encourage those staunch airmen who can be trusted to perform their duties without constant supervision and deal faithfully with those whom you discover shirking. Their influence has the insidious effects of a canker, small in its beginning, difficult to treat when it grows to noticeable size.

An honest grumble is a British privilege and carries no hurt, but the perpetual grouser exasperates everyone in a different way—unless he becomes a topical joke. By interest in sport and recreation a non-commissioned officer earns respect and helps to keep alive the spirit of friendly rivalry so useful in

a unit. Remember that the close contacts of life in a unit prosper by the exercise of natural dignity: easy familiarity destroys respect.

Under changed conditions of warfare non-commissioned officers and airmen of all trade groups are brought within the battle area; all are now liable to attack from the air. While imposing on them additional responsibilities air attack provides opportunities for displaying courage and initiative which non-commissioned officers must accept. Properly used, their grit and resourcefulness will increase the respect of their comrades.

Human Errors.

A firm but just treatment of men is the adjunct of collective discipline, which may be undermined by suggestions of favouritism or of condoning laziness, even if through failure to discover it. Take especial care, therefore, to observe your men closely, and to adopt a strict impartiality in all matters of duty. See to it that duties are shared equally and that the "willing horse" is not overdriven.

The Salute.

The correct forms of salute must be carried out by all non-commissioned officers. As a mark of respect observance of the salute in the prescribed manner raises the tone of a unit, whose actions are noted by the general public; and it is useful training for airmen in vigilance when on or off parade.

The Imperial Yard Stick.

From all airmen is expected the highest form of discipline wherein everyone tries conscientiously to carry out his duties with his utmost ability. No lower standard is worthy of the inspiring example set by air crews, and ground staffs whose faithful work makes their deeds possible. A young Service that appeals to youth the, Royal Air Force, nevertheless, has fashioned a mighty tradition, maintaining "a severe code of duty, a high standard of quiet courage and an immense corporate pride."