



From the Desk of the Field Artillery CSM

REDLEG PRIDE

I received a message recently through my official page that I thought was worth discussing with a larger audience, as it speaks directly to something that is often misunderstood or overlooked outright – pride in one's branch. In this particular message, a young noncommissioned officer expressed concern that some younger Soldiers have lost their pride and honor in being a Redleg.

The Army is an organization that instills pride in its members because of its history, mission, capabilities, and the respect it has earned in the service of the Nation. A reflection of that pride is visible in the customs, courtesies, and traditions the Army holds. Adherence to them connects us with Soldiers throughout America's history. This connection isn't automatic and we can't expect our young Redlegs to just plug in and go when it comes to buying in to what makes us the King of Battle - this connection takes engagement, example and shared experience. We as leaders, need to understand the continuum of a Soldier's path, reflect on how we got to where we are and objectively consider what and who influenced us along the way.

We start with a pretty good ingredient, those in the less than one percent of the American population who desire and are qualified to serve. These folks, from across every socio-economic demography can give all kinds of reasons why they joined – money for college, adventure, learn a skill – but every one of those things, you can get elsewhere; the real reason they've joined – they all want to be a part of something bigger than themselves. By doing so, they place themselves in a position from which they must earn; earn the respect, the trust, the comradery of their peers. They do so through shared experience, hardship and training; passing through this process, they each begin to understand the strength of the team, they begin to function as a team, and they begin to identify as a team. During this early phase, they are introduced to the Army values – at first just words on paper that

they must memorize and learn each definition – and they're told they must follow them. The reality is that it will take time for them to adopt them as their own – they know they must follow them, but they have not yet internalized them. As they experience examples of those values demonstrated by others around them, as they endure trials and hardships where these values become guiding principles and they are led by leaders who espouse these values, they too will assume said values as their own.

We can't simply tell our troopers they should be proud to be a Redleg or expect that pride to be automatic. Pride is a funny thing. You can outwardly show your affiliation by wearing certain items, but it doesn't mean you've invested yourself into what it is you're affiliating with. Not convinced? Ever see a fat guy wearing a "UFC" shirt? How about a two year old with a mini NFL jersey on? You know they ain't endured what it takes or experienced the tough road to actually be a part of that particular profession. Now, you see someone wearing that jersey while putting in work at the gym, training long hours with their team to be the best, stepping onto the field and dominating an opponent; you know they are truly committed to their profession and of what they have accomplished. They have faced tough training, endured hardships together and built an identity as a team. They have studied the game together, learning what those before them had to do, gaining an appreciation for what it took and developing mutual trust and an understanding of what it takes to get 'there.' As they may move to other teams, they'll always have the pride for what they earned and will take that with them as they go on to play and lead on other teams.

Much is the same when developing a sense of pride as a Redleg. You want your Soldiers to be proud to be a Redleg? Start by setting tough, realistic stan-

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dards and hold them to them, include yourself in that, in everything. Good enough, ain't. We can't preach standards and precision, and then allow short cuts. If that last occupation wasn't perfect, retrain the sticking points and do it again, and again, and again until it is. Will it be tough? Yep. Will there be some moaning and complaints? Yep. Do it anyway, so your crew will be the fastest and can perform to standard under any conditions. Don't leave the motor pool so early. Use that time to teach them more about their equipment and how it works and how to keep it working, so when times get tough, they know what to do. Get out of the classroom/barracks and hit the local training area every chance you get, hell, make chances – no competition or battle was ever won from a classroom or with the best Power-point slide show. They may not understand it while they're sweaty and tired, but that work will pay off when they win those competitions or are engaged in battle and they'll gain that appreciation for what it took to get 'there'.

Show them what the whole team does any chance you get. We all know what our particular function is in the kill chain, but how many have seen what the rest of that action looks like? Do they truly understand why their standards and precision are so important? How many Cannoneers or Rocketeers have seen what happens when the round/rocket leaves the tube, have they seen them impact? How many Fisters or FDC bubbas have loaded a round or pulled a lanyard? We take for granted what we do, because it's what we do, but to the uninitiated, that stuff is pretty cool. When Soldiers get to see the big picture, what their actions actually accomplish, their chest will poke out just a little bit more. Couple that with understanding of what the other Redlegs around you contribute to putting steel on target and decimating said target, well, three bubbas in a tank just can't compare.

Don't shy away from customs, traditions and ceremonies. Even leaders sometimes look at these as a distraction, something else to get done and their Soldiers will approach it with the same attitude. If you take the position that each of these opportunities is an important step in passing on these customs, traditions and ceremonies to the next generation of leaders (your Soldiers) you'll not only pass on the experience,

but will also help develop their appreciation of what those that did it before them had to do which prepares them to pass it on to their Soldiers, each step instills a little more pride along the way. If it's important to you and you show them, it'll be more important to them. Everyone knows the Salute Battery is the coolest thing on the parade field. Just as cool is the ranks of other Redlegs marching behind those cross-cannon guidons, because they can all do it too. Regular in-ranks inspections where you quiz your Soldiers' knowledge, doesn't matter the uniform, gets them focused on importance of appearance while teaching them. How about that new Sergeant, up on the stage during their NCO Induction Ceremony, looking out over the audience of their former peers, who are now their responsibility, think that Redleg will have a little pride? It's totally worth the investment.

Competition breeds success, participation trophies don't. Everyone likes to win, to be the best at something – those that say they don't are only trying to convince themselves. Everything should be a competition. Healthy competition makes everyone go a little harder and it doesn't have to be limited to "official" events or sports. Of course, your Soldiers will put forth extra effort when it's time for section competitions, but why wait until then? Instill in them that you're always in competition with someone, even if it's yourself, and that drive becomes contagious. Little rewards to each winner along the way, particularly if the rewards are outward in nature, will motivate those around to go a little harder next time, to search out and pursue their band of excellence. It doesn't matter what it is, make it a competition and you'll see a different level of performance. Make competition a regular thing and you'll see gains across a whole bunch of areas and a marked increase in pride. First round safely out of the tube, first finisher on the ruck march, "300" club in APFT, those are the typical things, but take it further; if competition becomes consistent, it will become part of the culture; that culture leads to identity and within it, pride.

One of my priorities when taking this job was to ensure we strengthen the role of our branch. Being a

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Redleg is physically demanding and mentally challenging. It ain't easy, if it was they'd call it Infantry. For many years we've been called on to do other things, and doing them well, but along the way we got away from doing some of those things that make Redlegs the best damn Soldiers in the Army. We're making progress everyday as we're getting back to our roots in training, traditions and customs but we've still got work to do. Soldiers will lead as they have been led, I have great confidence in our Soldiers and their leaders, if we all just focus on making our little piece

of the Army the best it can be, we'll get there. Lead your Soldiers, teach and train them well, they will follow the example you give and that identity, that pride you help instill, will always be with them.

King of Battle!
Redleg 7

CSM Berk Parsons

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Social Media Best Practices

If a Soldier or leader uses a social networking site where he or she is or may be identified or associated with the U.S. Army, they must remember how they appear to represent their organization and the United States of America. UCMJ and other guidelines and regulations still apply.



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