

Radical Leadership Changes

General Rogers, the singular Commander of all that went on at Fort Carson - from the long time Federal employment civilians who ran the post supply system to the military M113 mounted Mech Infantry Soldiers, started radically different small changes that then built up to unprecedented - in traditional Army practices - to a totally different philosophy of leadership for a peacetime, post Vietnam War, but still ready to fight the next war - Army.

His first command to all the subordinate commanders and all the Civilian heads of Post departments, was 'Take care of the Soldier' - not just 'Soldier, do your duty or else'

For a Division and Post where misbehaving, short timers in the Army, coming off an unpopular war where even the American public looked down on them, the soldiers were being blamed for everything, that was a refreshing change to require all leaders to FIRST take

care of the welfare of the soldiers, AND then listen to them, seriously before demanding their performance. Good leaders in the Army had always 'taken care' of their soldiers first, but the tensions and turbulence at the end of Vietnam where outgoing drafted soldiers didn't give a damn, even embittered the long time career NCOs and officers who tended to treated them with more hard discipline than understanding coming off a nasty, unpopular, war. And they didn't listen to those of lesser rank. For the traditional view of the Army was that Americans, once drafted by law, were obliged to obey the orders of the Chain of Command, or face Courts Martial punishment, not complain except in a very formal procedures to the IGs - Inspector Generals. And 'suggestions for change' by soldiers were rarely listened to or acted upon. Because the other belief was that more senior, older, experienced and trained NCO's and officers 'knew it all' and unsolicited advice was not welcome - from outside civilians, or 2 year draftees. It was still the old

Brown Shoe Army. The Fort Carson Stockade was filling up.

But the word started spreading, that 'The Old Man' - the top local commander, a general - cares about us. Even the older civilian employees who did much of the in and out processing of soldiers, with the myriad details about uniforms, Army equipment they possessed, travel reimbursements - etc - and tended to treat the soldiers rudely when they had a 'don't care' attitude - were ordered to 'care for the soldier.' They, many of whom were having the same kind of attitude problems with their own teen age children, got the message and began to 'care' more, and tolerate the war returnee soldiers better.

Rogers started to implement a whole series of radical things that utterly changed the morale of everyone at Fort Carson, became national news, and eventually influenced the entire Army to make the changes necessary to attract, and retain Volunteer, rather than Drafted, soldiers.

First he convened an 'Enlisted Men's Council, where-in every unit all the soldiers below the rank of E-5 (Sergeant) were to ELECT a spokesman for the complaints from the lower rank soldiers of that unit. And HE would meet with that Council weekly, requiring the Post Staff heads to attend and listen while the Sp4 and Privates of the Division got their men's gripes - and suggestions - off their chests.

When they complained they could not drink beer in the barracks, he rescinded that order. When they complained the Enlisted Clubs on post were shut down too early, he changed the hours. When they complained of Army chow, and that they ate off post at places like McDonalds, he got a Burger King to set up ON post. But he also let them understand they could help improve soldier's lives at Fort Carson by making constructive suggestions, not just pass on complaints. He gave the radical 'Enlisted Men's Council' a stake in running Fort Carson. And he adopted up to 70% of their suggestions - which began to flow as they

realized he was serious about making changes that would make their life and duties while at Fort Carson better.

The Ticking (in my head) Computer Bomb

One revelation, at this improbable time in my maturing - but 'back of my head' -education about the future of America happened right about then - 1970, when General Rogers was attempting to do all he could to help thousands of soldiers who had their lives changed by the draft - spent a full year in a nasty, and seemingly hopeless war - and then faced only a few months left at Fort

Carson before being dumped back out into American society at the end of their enlistment. What were they, individually, going to do for a living after 2 disruptive years of their young lives? They wondered, and he, in an astonishing desire to 'take care of his soldiers' even to the point of helping them make the transition from the Army into civilian life, actually looked into what it would take - even if

only by giving them advice as they went out the door.

Roger's - who from his broad understanding of America culture, and his willingness to think 'out of the box' briefly addressed that issue by asking himself - and then the Fort Carson staff - whether he could 'match up' the individual skills the soldiers had aquired - by Army specific training during their two Army years - with possible civilian jobs or career fields they could pursue after their service. And he asked the Post's civilian Computer Data Base managers what it would take to feed in the individual soldier's 'MOS' (military occupational specialty) job, and correlate it with outside jobs and careers.

Given that at least 5,000 soldiers a month were leavng the service from Carson (and about the same number were arriving from Vietnam with the very high 'turnover' rate Carson was experiencing) that would have been an impossible task to do manually. But Rogers

knew that Carson had main-frame computers tracking all the equipment and supplies it handled, and all the personnel - including MOS records, and post finances.

But the answer he got was that it would cost over a million dollars, years or more of 'computer programming' work, and a much expanded civilian staff. That answer caused Rogers to swiftly drop the idea. But when I heard the proposal and the answer, I was instantly angered by that bureacratic staff answer. I knew virtually nothing about computer costs, or programming lead times. But I knew that America's future was going to be greatly affected by progress in computers in government, business, science, defense, and finance. And I was already reading Toffler's landmark book 'Future Shock' that was making predictions of how computers were going be one of the forces that would accelerate changes in society.

I instantly exclaimed to myself 'BullsXXX' That

staff just doesn't WANT to take on such a task - or seriously measure it - even if they were given the resources. And they had no grasp of what an original idea Rogers was asking about - in his desire to help his soldiers as much as he could. I also dropped the matter too. I had much more pressing duties to attend to.

But I remember that moment - a kind of epiphany - even now as I write - over 40 years later - because the brief exchange set off a ticking idea bomb in the recesses of my brain that would, within 5 years - and after I had retired from military service - burst my thinking 'out of the box' into my conviction that we were entering into an 'Information Age', in which computers would make things possible that had never been practical or economic before. This was 7 years before the world's first 'personal' computer - the Apple II - was unveiled and 8 before its Radio Shack competitor - showed up to change the world. And what I then invented from their potential.

At 42 that confirmed, - again - how, fueled by the genes in my ancestral Celtic imagination, I was able to visualize unborn future possibilities that my practical side honed by my West Point Bachelor of Science education, and my 20 years experience using it was going to be able to bring into the real world.

I began to read, when I had the time from my grinding duties, a large number of books and papers that attempted to define the future in ways that were not just linear extensions of the past. In retrospect, my FIELD MANUALS for how to make the Future Army - starting at Fort Carson - work were 'Future Shock,' Neither Marx nor Jesus. 'The Medium is the Message', and 'Megatrends.'

The Roger's Initiatives

The astonishing, in retrospect, number of changes - at least 57 - that Roger's had already

changed in policies, regulations, practices that the Public Information Officer - compiled to give to the Press, is shown here as a small original pdf file.

[Volar Changes](#)

As word got around about the litany of changes Rogers implemented, both the more traditional-minded "Old Army" officers and NCO's on Fort Carson, their spouses, the older and more conservative civilians - both employees who worked at Carson, and many in the surrounding Colorado Springs and El Paso County expressed great doubts that they would 'work.'

Only the younger soldiers and their wives and girlfriends, and some young 60's generation, usually well educated, commissioned officers applauded the changes. Many of those were disbelieving that General Rogers was serious about following through on many of them, or that his superiors would 'let him' do many of the things he announced or ordered done. But as in many positions of authority - one does not know

the limits of that authority unless he exceeds it and is admonished by superiors. He was not curbed. Because his 'superiors' had no answers of their own for low morale, racial and drug problems, the lingering anti-war sentiments, short-timer attitudes - or the distaste Fort Carson soldiers had for just Army chow, WWII barracks living, shoddy entertainment facilities, poor treatment by civilians off post, and no place to gripe - except to each other.

Things were so bad few of the doubters had any better solutions, as crime, political dissent, violating regulations and the break down of 'good order and discipline' with drugs everywhere affected life everywhere in El Paso County.

Change in Handling Racial Problems

Then Rogers separately convened a 'Racial Harmony Council' after many of the issues which came up in the 'Enlisted Council' meetings were in fact race relations problems. Low ranking black, Hispanic, or other ethnic

minority soldiers could also elect their spokesmen. General Rogers would meet them too, listening to their gripes about everything from Racial Discrimination to lack of black cosmetics for their wives in Carson's PX. That too began to change the racial attitudes toward race on the Post.

Roger's took complaints about Civilian agencies - Police, Highway Patrol, even the elections law. And had his counterpart officials, Provost Marshal, Legal officers, meet with off post agencies.

There was even a 'Junior Officers' council started.

A much overlooked factor was that many Drafted soldiers at low Army Rank had education and experience running civilian community centers, drug centers, even ecological programs - which they were willing to share with the Chain of Command to make Fort Carson's 'community' work better.

At one Enlisted Man's Council meeting, where drugs were the problem, I realized that the more senior Hospital military doctors and administrators didn't even know the difference between 'Mary Jane' and heroin, or how to treat them. Later I got behind a Drug Treatment 'Head Shop' and insured it was staffed by street-experienced low rank soldiers who had run such facilities.

I immediately saw what brilliant and bold leadership was at work by Rogers - opening up his office to any complaint and act on it if it were justified - while still expecting the soldiers to do their duties - I caught the spirit of it within my own staff sections, military and civilian.

Meanwhile I had been doing a mammoth and original staff analysis of just what the 'Training demands' that higher (than even the Fort Carson Commander) headquarters required of all units that were so overwhelming they could not do them all. I came up with an ingenious way to put them in priority by time

measurements. So I was wrestling with the combat training and readiness needs of the command. My primary responsibility.

Then I got a note from Gen Dewitt Smith, who had carefully listened to my comments and plans about training, and the adequacy of our training areas.

Sudden Promotion of My Status

Dewitt suggested to General Rogers that he make ME, who was on the promotion list for Colonel, but months away from being promoted, THE Chief of Staff of BOTH the Division AND Post!

That would elevate me in position over 12 Full Colonels and many more Senior to me (date of rank) Lieutenant Colonels on Fort Carson! I was doubly stunned, first of all by the suggestion by Dewitt. And then I was astonished by the fact that General Rogers agreed. The previous older, much longer in colonel's time in grade, incumbent was retiring that month. Rogers

moved me out of the G-3 slot and put me in as THE Chief of Staff of both the Division and Post.

As the local and Denver Press reported it was very unusual for a Lieutenant Colonel to be made Chief of Staff of a large command - a full Colonel's position.

That was an enormous vote of confidence, not only in my ability to handle the job, but in my creative ability to further General Rogers' vision of how to get everyone at Carson to help, rather than hinder, it in its missions.

I knew that the changes I was getting behind would be very controversial within the Army. And those at the Department of Army who judged my performance and fitness for advancement could well be prejudiced against such radical changes and that could affect my future. Very controversial officers are often not advanced, regardless of who sponsored them earlier - or what they had accomplished during their 'controversial' years. Billy Mitchell was an

example.

I took a deep breath when I sat down at the Chief of Staff's desk, right outside General Roger's office door, realizing I had 25 Lieutenant Colonels and a number of full colonels now reporting directly to me, a \$30 million post budget to manage, multi-thousand civilian employees to oversee, a host of problems with housing, the hospital, the processing centers, the stockade, the commissary and post exchange, and with the District Attorney, the Police Department, the Highway Patrol, the Mayor and City Council to deal with. And yet an underlying Mission to get the 5th, later 4th Mechanized Infantry Division ready for European contingencies and deployment, including combat.

But at the core, I knew that the rock-bottom mission of Fort Carson was still - to get, and maintain, Combat Readiness of a 16,000 soldier Division.

Training Land Issues

At the same time the Army itself was trying to expand Fort Carson on the land that the City Council promised would be 'easy' to buy without condemnation proceedings. So I was thrust also into appearing before County Commissioners on land issues. Where I ran into the reneging by Colorado Springs, and Pueblo Elected Officials of the 'promises they had made' to the Army for the expansion of Fort Carson - if the Army just promised to keep Carson open and filled with spending soldiers.

At one point in 1971 I appeared before the three El Paso County Commissioners, 2 Republicans and 1 Democrat, on whether or not 'Rancho Colorado' land - useless for anything, with no water, a strip that could be used as a live fire 'buffer' between the populated areas east of Interstate 25 - could be purchased by the Army without condemnation procedures. Because a fly-by-night developer suddenly decided he wanted to 'develop' that land, the two Republican Commissioners voted against the purchase. Only the Democratic

Commissioner listened carefully to our - and my - military arguments and voted for the purchase. The vote of the other two were clearly 'knee jerk' conservatives siding with a businessman over the needs of the Army

The same problem emerged when the Pueblo County Commissioners balked at permitting the Army to purchase land south of the then-southern Fort Carson Boundary - which had been adequate space from 1942 to 1968 for the training needs of the 'boots on the ground' Infantry units, but were not at all big enough for the needs of the Mechanized units. And they even objected to the Army getting access to the Northern shore line of the brand new FEDERAL Pueblo Reservoir - so that the amphibious M113 tracks of the Mech Division could properly train for river crossings in Europe. Pueblo wanted that Reservoir as their private lake. As the envisioned a beautiful resort there.

They too reneged on their promise to the Army.

So in the end only part of the needed expansion of the training ground was acquired. And a sorry marginal value subdivision called Pueblo West was created on the south of the Reservoir.

I have NEVER forgiven either Colorado Springs or Pueblo for their hypocritical efforts to get the Federal Government to pour millions into the retention and expansion of Fort Carson and the stationing of at least one 16,000 man Mechanized Infantry Division, there with with promises to help the Army acquire the needed training land and then turn around to object to the Army acquiring the land. Bluntly neither city deserves Fort Carson's largesse. And having trained a Mechanized Infantry Battalion, fought in two wars, and having been the G-3 of the Division before becoming Chief of Staff I knew, better than any one else - what was needed to get, and keep ready, the central combat division stationed at the Fort.

And that hypocrisy is what motivated me, after

never having registered to vote with a party affiliation, registered as a Democrat when I retired two years later, and remained a Democrat into 20010.

My Scope

Under General Rogers I felt I could use my innate ability to find creative ways to do things and I could approve many things on my own and not have to ask him for permission for every small thing. One does not know when his authority is exceeded until he actually tries to do things and is curbed by his superiors. That was just as true for General Rogers and his superiors, as for myself. The line between an impractical dreamer and an applauded innovator, is pretty thin. And is often as much a function of how much implicit authority one's boss gives as in risk taking in an inherently hierarchical system. I passed onto my subordinates the same liberal authority.

Fort Carson swiftly began to take on a permissive climate of 'change' that cascaded down the chain of command. Even the lowest rank soldiers began to take their own initiative to improve small things about the Post and Army. That was one lasting legacy from General Rogers leadership style.

I never doubted what our military missions were - it was simply that we were going about getting them done in new ways that were calculated to get our soldiers, officers, civilians under our control to help get things done, rather than be obstacles - in spite of national and societal problems.

I was never so 'open minded' to change that my brains fell out. For I have always tried to relate what I am doing, or supporting, back to first principles. I knew what the Army was for, and what place its soldiers had in American Society, and I knew that as the nation, and warfare, changed, so needed soldiers and the Army to change - while still being capable of carrying

out the foreign policy objectives of the United States.

Societal Communicationst.

A whole number of other innovations were implemented by Gen Rogers.

The essence of what we were striving to do became apparent.

A young lieutenant suggested that Fort Carson open a 'Coffee House' on post - to compete with the anti-military gatherings off post. It was. And General Rogers was the first post official to sit on the 'hot seat' where any soldier could come in at night and ask him about, or criticize anything about Carson or the Army while inside the Coffee House. While the soldier would still would be expected to be soldierly outside. The unprecedented on post 'Coffee House' got so popular that even some civilians snuck onto the post to attend it, rather than the ones downtown. It had more open and honest dialogue.

At one time a Soldier named Gaxiola told the General he was running a political prison - Fort Carson's Stockade. Rogers asked "Why don't you work with us to improve things rather than fight us?" Gaxiola said "What can I do. I am only a BAR man." Rogers answered "You can become a counselor in my stockade" Which he was duly appointed. It was later when the wisdom of that move paid off.

I recognized that the most fundamental innovation Roger's had made was to separate open and free DIALOG - including strong criticism - between soldiers and the chain of command right up the Commanding General from expectations of obedient soldierly BEHAVIOR on post and when in ranks on duty.

One Radical move we made was to permit Black soldiers to put on Black Guerilla Theater on Post. And the General commanded all the battalion commanders to attend at least one show.

The rules there were simple. Soldiers could say

anything they wanted as actors on the stage. But would be expected to salute - maintain military courtesy - when outside the Little Theater.

We were as concerned about 'educating' our key commanders about racial attitudes as expressed by soldiers - free to do so - as we were in how they dealt with such volatile matters.

I also realized that General Rogers and I knew - from our broad education - more about the value of Aristotle's views of the societal value of theatrical 'katharsis' than the black soldiers did. Criticism in a socially approved forum - theater - can be more effective in making profound points than street protests or law suits.

Even more socially extreme, a few younger activist Catholic Chaplains got together and put on the only legally approved - outside of New York - performances of 'Jesus Christ, Superstar' on our military post. Of course that musical tried to synthesize the '60's culture with traditional

Christianity. The little old Post Theater became a place of reform.

About that time, I had begun, to read papers and acadmic books which dealt with the profound societal changes taking place in American society and their probable future course. It was another way we were beginning to understand the changing nature of American soldiers which we had to motivate and command in time of war.

It is not too much to say my Field Manuals for the future Army - running Fort Carson - were Future Shock, Neither Marx Nor Jesus, the Medium is the Message, the Greening of America, and Megatrends.

I later realized we, at Fort Carson, in the Army, were already way ahead of the civilian population of Colorado Springs in understanding changes that were taking place in soldiers.

I found such readings very useful after I

retired, when began to act to change a whole depressed and blighted neighborhood of the City of Colorado Springs.

Of course the big question always asked by those not involved was "But will the hippie Volunteer Soldiers Fight"

I think their behavior in Desert Storm, Iraq, and Afghanistan since the 60's proves they have and will.