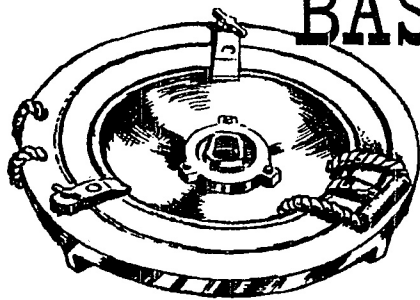




BASEPLATE

Mc GURK



High school grad? Rent past due? Wife expecting?
Mother-in-law expected? When it comes to his men, a good
leader has the answers

ONE EVENING RECENTLY, WHILE WAITING FOR THE Ale and Quail Club to assemble, I decided to take advantage of a rare opportunity: have a long chat with Bertram-the-bar-keep before the premises became cluttered.

"Bertram," I said, "let me ask you something. During and since the Second War, there's been a lot of research and thought given to Leadership. As a result, we know more about it. Now, here's my question: how did you characters in the Old Corps maintain such high discipline and esprit since you didn't know nearly as much about leadership as we do?"

Bertram carefully inspected the brandy snifter he was polishing and casually asked, "How many men in your platoon are high school graduates?"

"Beats me!" I said, "but don't try to tell me you had better educated troops in your day."

"How many of your squad leaders have financial or personal problems?" Bertram persisted.

"Now wait a minute, dammit!" I said, feeling kind of foolish. "What's this got to do with leadership? I might not know this trivia, but I sure know how to lead my platoon. Believe you me, Cousin, I know leadership principles from aardvark to zymurgy!"

"Not in my book you don't," Bertram growled, "but don't feel bad—few of your playmates do either. Some of you will learn in time the one principle most often ignored. Then again some will never learn. Most often a young idiot simply grows into an old fool."

"Spare me your homespun philosophy and get specific," I snorted.

"O.K., put it this way," Bertram said laying down his bar rag and taking his driver's license from his bill-

fold. "This little paper doesn't mean I'm an authority on automobiles. Likewise your commission doesn't mean you're an authority on men."

When I nodded in agreement, he continued, "Now a hot mechanic knows more than just how to drive his car. He knows everything there is to know about it. When it starts to act up, he can spot trouble before it develops into something serious. Once found, he knows what to do about it."

By this time Johnny and Tex had joined us and were listening attentively. Even Paddle-foot Pinkleton had checked his nightly assault upon the popcorn. The joint was as quiet as a general's anteroom.

Relentlessly, Bertram then posed some real gassers.

"How many of you," he asked, "really know everything there is to know about every man-jack in your platoon? If you don't have this information, how can you spot trouble before it develops into something serious? Furthermore, if it does develop into a real personal crisis for one of your men, how can you take appropriate action if you have no 'feel' for him as an individual?"

"I hate to admit it, but I guess Dusty is the only one who can qualify," Johnny said slowly. "He keeps a separate 'dope' card on each man in his platoon."

"Right!" Tex agreed. "Whether or not his system is the best doesn't really matter. Main thing is: he always knows everything he needs to know about every man in his outfit."

"Well, Mr. Baseplate," Bertram said proudly, "there's your answer as to how we in the Old Corps muddled through. Maybe we didn't know a lot of the high sounding names for what we did. But one thing for certain: we sure as hell knew our men!"

US & MC