

**Excerpts from remarks by
Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Merdith “Bo” Temple**

Gold DeFleury Acceptance Remarks

**Fort Leonard Wood, MO
25 April 2014**

Welcome and thanks to everyone for your presence at this important meeting of our Regiment!

I thank all present who, in their own way, made me a better sapper, officer, and regimental member. I thank all my mentors, many of whom are here, but especially the NCOs. Why? Because our professional NCO Corps ensures that we follow the three R's – that is doing the right thing, for the right reason, and most importantly, in the right way.

Our NCOs remind me that nothing good in this world gets done without good effort and energy. I have such fond memories of them and everyone with whom I have served. I am so grateful for their adherence to standards and their leadership which had a tremendous, positive impact on me, my family, and on everyone they knew. Thank you!

What elements make our Regiment great - mental, physical, materiel, or leadership/spiritual? In my view, the latter is paramount and is reflected in some of the great battalion mottos we have such as Essayons – let US try! Or from our French comrades: “Je suis un sapeur sans reproche” – I am a sapper without reproach, blot, or blemish.

How about our UK and Commonwealth nation friends: “Ubique” – the root word for ubiquitous - everywhere.

This is a true reflection of sappers on the battlefield. The 44th Engineer Battalion: “Builders of Freedom”. The 65th: “First In – Last Out”. The 326th: “Nostrum Est (The Task is Ours)”. The 1203^d: “Topographers in Action”. The 391st: “Ya’ll Come”. The 203^d: “Don’t Kick Our Dog”. The 307th: “I Maintain the Right”.

All of these mottos and so many more reflect, in their own way, the Sapper Spirit.

That spirit compels us to anticipate and to address issues or missions quickly. It’s really the difference between being a pipe-smoking engineer who thinks too long and hard, searching for the perfect solution which may be provided too late. This is opposed to the Sapper who searches for the 80%, good enough solution NOW. And I’m not talking about sacrificing standards, quality, or safety, rather about thinking quickly, making a timely decision, communicating clearly, and erring on the side of speed.

Why is the leadership/spiritual factor paramount in my view? Because an opponent might not be superior in the mental, physical, or materiel areas, but if he has superior will, he can be successful. So our leadership/spiritual strengths must be greater if we are to succeed. This is especially true given the difficult tasks sappers must perform. We must be clear of purpose, proactive problem solvers, and take action IOT keep our side ahead of the opposition.

Certainly the leadership and spirit displayed by DeFleury at Stony Point is reflected in today’s sappers. This great French engineer was such a terrific leader and so versatile that he was made second in command of his infantry regiment for the assault on Stony Point. Because of his spirit and leadership when the Corps commander and regimental commander were wounded, he led the assault that ultimately resulted in the capitulation of this key strongpoint.

His leadership is reflected in his final act when, as he said “The fort’s our own” and struck the enemy’s colors from its flagpole, he saved lives on both sides. Fundamentally, DeFleurey didn’t waste time, or effort, but most of all he did not waste people, our most important asset. His is an example of technical competence and leadership that is one we should follow every day. I am grateful to have served with so many terrific sappers and engineers; officers, WOs, NCOs, enlisted of every branch of every service and many of our Allies, government civilians and civilian contractors all of whom made me better. How? By helping me overcome any weaknesses that I may have had and I hope I, in turn, was able to help others as well.

This spirit of mutual support and the will to win makes us better sappers and leaders, carrying us all together through many difficulties, successes, and victories at home and abroad.

We must use that same leadership and spirit to sustain our capabilities through the upcoming austere times to ensure that our Regiment, no matter its size, is ready to succeed again in response to disasters and overseas contingencies. Places like the Maneuver Support Center, its schools, and of course the Engineer School here at FLW play, and will continue to play, a critical role in this regard.

So focus your efforts, train hard, support each other, use your imagination, and leverage that sapper spirit across all components to stay prepared for whatever our country may ask you to do. That is the fundamental and enduring task of everyone, to sustain our future readiness. Regardless of the challenges, I know that as long as our Regiment has the terrific leadership and spirit of those we remembered yesterday evening at the Sapper Grove that we will do just that. Their sacrifices and those of their families will always be remembered in our hearts and minds because after all, what is memory, but love everlasting.

I end as I began, by thanking all of you for that Sapper Spirit which was embedded in me by your mentorship, guidance, and example and for its positive impact on me and my family over the years. I am especially grateful to the AEA, its Board of Directors, and to its Executive Director, Col. (Ret) Jack O'Neill, a great sapper in his own right, for tonight's recognition. Our Regimental Association does so much for soldiers and their families to include scholarships, tonight's awards, and even the ability of our museum, which cannot accept or use Federal funds, to acquire the artifacts and knowledge that perpetuates the Sapper Spirit and legacy here at Fort Leonard Wood. Our support is critical to AEA's success.

This Gold DeFleury reflects the Sapper Spirit and so, on behalf of all sappers past and present, but especially on behalf of all of you here this evening, I humbly accept this great honor. Sappers Forward! Essayons! God's blessings to you and your families, our Regiment, and our great nation! Thank you!

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