

**CSM (R) Basil L. Plumley**

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L-06**

## NCO History Outline

### I. Introduction. A brief statement about CSM (R) Basil L. Plumley

#### A. List:

Lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore, USA (Ret.) and Joseph L. Galloway. We Were Soldiers Once...and Young. New York: Random House, 1992

1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division Site. [www.first-team.usa/journals/7th\\_rgmt](http://www.first-team.usa/journals/7th_rgmt)

82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Site. [www.2-airborne.us/division/82\\_overview.html](http://www.2-airborne.us/division/82_overview.html)

187<sup>th</sup> Airborne Regiment. [www.campbell.army.mil](http://www.campbell.army.mil)

Headquarters Department of the Army Washington, DC. (1999) Field Manual 22-100, Army Leadership, BE, Know, Do

Joseph L. Galloway. *We were soldiers once and young*.  
“<http://www.lzxray.com>”

#### B. The purpose of this brief is to familiarize students on the military career of CSM (R) Basil L. Plumley.

### II. Body.

A. What we view as a Sergeants Major, and how CSM (R) Plumley fits into my personal mold of what one should be.

B. Brief Biography of CSM (R) Basil Plumley.

C. Leadership Values and how CSM (R) Plumley achieved them during his Career.

D. Why I believe that CSM (R) Plumley is the kind of Hero we need to look up to.

### III. Closing.

A. A Summary.

B. A question and answer period.

C. A Concluding statement.

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### CSM Basil L. Plumley

Everyone in the Army has an image of what a Sergeants Major is. Some feel that the Sergeants Major (SGM) should be very approachable, and friendly. I believe that a SGM should be the meanest man in the Battalion. The most competent individual the unit has to offer. When he comes towards you, you know fear because if anything is wrong, he will find it, and you will pay the price because he does not stand for anything that is not within regulation. He is the ultimate soldier, all knowing, all seeing, and a professional to the end. SGM Plumley was this kind of SGM. His men said of him, "God may look like SGM Plumley, but he isn't nearly as tough on sins small or large."

Basil L. Plumley was born in West Virginia, and joined the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division during World War II. As a Sergeant he was assigned to the 187<sup>th</sup> Airborne Infantry Regiment during the Korean War. He was promoted to the rank of Sergeant Major in 1961, and assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment in 1964. Basil Plumley became one of the first SGMs to be promoted to the relatively new rank of CSM in 1969. He retired from the military in 1974 after 32 years of service.

SGM Plumley was a SGM that should be the mold for today's Sergeants Majors. He did not preach leadership principals, he lived them. No matter what time of day or what the circumstances, he was the constant professional. His work ethics and leadership values were not lost on the new Battalion Commander of the 1/7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. LTC Moore knew that he had a rare find with SGM Plumley, for both of them shared the same values.

The SGM like himself believed in hard training, because realistic and hard training saved lives in battle.

Leadership values, respect and integrity: SGM Plumley knew what this meant. He treated soldiers the way they deserve to be treated, with tact and dignity. Not taking advantage of his position, and always showing concern for soldier's safety and well being. Always doing what is right, no matter the consequences, standards and morals readily seen by all. SGM Plumley had the respect of his men, both above and below him. LTC Moore and SGM Plumley made a good team. The commander made sure that the Battalion was doing the right things, SGM Plumley made sure that the Battalion was doing things right. SGM Plumley understood that his position was to lead men. He carried a .45 pistol into battle. His job was to direct his men in the fight, a true combat multiplier. When you think of Respect and Integrity, you think of SGM Plumley.

Personal Courage: demonstrated bravery in the face of others, displayed by an individual who is not afraid to make decisions and live with his actions. SGM Plumley understood what personal courage was. One night during a fierce fire fight, SGM Plumley's unit was directing mortar fire, and utilizing illumination rounds. One round failed to deploy the parachute and fell into the base camp. It had landed in a box of grenades in the Command Post area. Without hesitation, SGM Plumley grabbed the mortar round and threw it outside of the perimeter. When he stood up, he was silhouetted by the fire. This made him a prime target for the enemy in the middle of the night. The other men in the Command Post had been diving for cover, but not SGM Plumley. When Personal Courage comes to mind, one is reminded of SGM Plumley.

Loyalty: true faith and allegiance to your country, Army and the unit, putting ones personal gain below the unit. SGM Plumley understood loyalty. The commander had made the statement before leaving for Vietnam that they would leave no man behind. SGM Plumley and LTC Moore believed that everyone was a team. Before the unit was leaving from Vietnam, it was identified that they had four missing in action from a prior battle. SGM Plumley, with LTC Moore and a few others went back out to the battlefield and searched until they had found the remains of the four missing in action on the Landing Zone. Loyalty, SGM Plumley lived loyalty.

Duty: carrying out the mission, setting the example while continuing to pursue excellence, the constant ability to meet professional standards. In an airborne unit sometimes you are required to make a combat jump. This kind of operation will take place at night, normally with as little illumination as possible. When a parachutist jumps from an aircraft in this type of operation, he normally is loaded down with equipment. His weapon will be attached to him, and he will be totally helpless while he is under canopy awaiting the ground. During this time, the enemy will try to shoot as many parachutes out of the sky as possible. You are totally helpless; this is a combat jump. You don't have to tell SGM Plumley about a combat jump, he is very familiar with them. During World War II, on July 9<sup>th</sup> 1943, Plumley made his first combat jump into Sicily with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. On September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1943 he made another combat jump with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division into Salerno. On June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944, Plumley, still with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, completed his third combat jump as he took place in Operation Overlord, the largest invasion of World War II. His unit parachuted into Normandy, securing St. Mere Iglese against terrible odds. Later that year, on September 17<sup>th</sup> Plumley made his fourth jump as part of Operation Market Garden, still with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne

Division. Plumley was a sergeant at the end of World War II, and was assigned to the 187<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment during the Korean War. It was here that he made his fifth combat jump into Sunchon Korea on October 20<sup>th</sup> 1950. He is one of few men who can claim to have made five combat jumps, but you won't here him brag about it, that is SGM Plumley, and that is Duty.

Selfless Service: always putting others before yourself, keeping the moral, sharing the hardships, and the ability to recognize others successes and failures. SGM Plumley does not talk about selfless service, he knows what it is. During the battle of Ia Drang in Vietnam, the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry was overwhelmingly outnumbered. The unit found itself fighting off wave after wave of Viet Cong. During some of the most horrible fighting, a corporal by the name of Galloway recalls everyone trying to get as close to the ground as possible. No one was returning fire; it didn't look good from his perspective. When all seemed hopeless, Corporal Galloway felt a boot in his side, it was SGM Plumley. He was directing return fire, encouraging men to take careful aim, and to make every shot count. He was standing when everyone else was flat on their stomach. He motivated the unit, and they rose to the challenge, fighting off the advance, and eventually winning the battle. Selfless service, SGM Plumley knows what it is, and because of his example, so do many soldiers that were at the battle of Ia Drang.

Honor: an individual who lives with honor, doesn't lie, cheat, steal or tolerate those who do. He lives up to Army values daily, without fail. When you speak of SGM Plumley, you cannot help but think of honor. When his men speak of him it is with respect, loyalty, and honor. This is how I look at SGM Plumley; he has a Combat Infantry Badge with two stars, one for World War II, one for Korea, and one for Vietnam.

He has two silver stars, four bronze stars, and four purple hearts. He is the recipient of a Master Parachutist Badge with five combat jumps. He has a European Theater Service Ribbon containing four invasion arrows and a Vietnam Service Ribbon with one Silver Star and three Bronze Campaign Stars. That's Honor.

Command Sergeants Major (CSM) Plumley retired in 1974 and continued to serve his country as a civilian at Fort Benning Georgia. Today, he is the honorary CSM of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment. He also finds time to attend ceremonies and represent the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry at such events as the Decatur's Patriotism Award, which he and Lt Gen (Ret.) Moore accepted in July of 2003 on behalf of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry.

When I think of a Sergeant Major, I think of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage. And when I think of these leadership values, I think of CSM (R) Basil L. Plumley.

Today, we are at War, and many seem to be searching for heroes. The media is quick to turn to those who are willing to tell everything for profit or fame. I think that a hero is someone who quietly does the best he can do, and continues without wanting any attention or glory. When I think of a hero, I think of someone like CSM Basil L. Plumley. We have more heroes out there in our military, but you have to look for them, you won't find them on your television, or front page news. You will find them simply doing their job the best they can. When the situation calls for something heroic, they simply complete the tasks and continue on the next day's mission. They are competent, respected, display selfless service, personal courage, duty, loyalty, and above all; honor.

Works Cited

*7<sup>th</sup> Calvary, former POW chosen for Decatur's Patriotism award.* Alabama, July 7, 2003  
<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/943203/posts>

82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Site. [www.2-airborne.us/division/82\\_overview.html](http://www.2-airborne.us/division/82_overview.html)

187<sup>th</sup> Airborne Regiment. [www.campbell.army.mil](http://www.campbell.army.mil)

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Joeseph L. Galloway. *We were soldiers once and young.* "http://www.lzxrays.com"

Lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore (Ret.) and Joeseph L. Galloway. We were soldiers once...and young. New York: Random House, 1992