



By DJ Montoya, 1st Space Brigade

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – “Leading the Way” with a special emphasis on celebrating “2009 The Year of The Noncommissioned Officer” were the key points of emphasis during this year’s U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command annual ball conducted Apr. 13, at the Double Tree Hotel.

A number of memorable moments took place, beginning with a standing ovation by a crowd of over 500 following a moving video tribute showcasing the Noncommissioned Officers of USASMDC/ARSTRAT.

Addressing military, Family members, government civilians, and contractors, LTG Kevin T. Campbell, commander USASMDC/ARSTRAT said, “There are a lot of great things about being an American and living in this country.”

“But I think that there is one that is sometimes under appreciated. And that is the Non-Commissioned Officers of the United States Army. They are men and women of character, of strong backbones, willing to dig their heels in when they have to dig them in. Willing to find common ground when they have to find common ground. I admire them.”

The highlight of the evening took place when 1SG William Edwards, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 53rd Signal Battalion, and the master of ceremonies for the evening, introduced guest speaker Randy Gradishar.

“Considered to be the heart of the Orange Crush defense that lead the Denver Broncos to the Super Bowl in 1978, Randy Gradishar, number 53, and the new ‘patron saint’ of the 53rd



Commanding General, LTG Kevin T. Campbell, right, listens intently as Randy Gradishar shares a story at their table during dinner. Gradishar, a former Denver Bronco, was the guest speaker at U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command's 2009 Ball. Photo by DJ Montoya, 1st Space Brigade

Signal Battalion, played for the Broncos for 10 seasons and earned the reputation as one of the best inside linebackers to play in the NFL.”

According to Edwards, Gradishar is active in the local military community. He has visited the troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other locations in the Central Command area of responsibility.

“The pride and support he has for our military and his experience in leadership and teamwork on and off the field offers a unique perspective on the challenges and hard work that is required of our Army.”

Taking center stage Gradishar elaborated on the ball's theme and it's acknowledgement of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps by defining leadership, particularly for the Space and Missile Defense Noncommissioned Officers in the audience, “My friend Lloyd Lewan ... taught me a few things over our tenure and our friendship - the definition of leadership.”

“He put it very simple, because as a former athlete, you try to keep things real simple. And I think the same thing applies, even in the military and that is ‘Present reality, say thank you, and in the, in-between, just serve. That's leadership.”

“In looking at that what you understand is that process of being a leader. If you can't value something you can't lead them. And if you can't lead them, you can't communicate to them. And if you can't communicate to them, I guarantee you don't have a team.”

Gradishar also touched on a number of areas that this year's celebration of the Noncommissioned Officer highlights when referring to his old coach Woody Hayes at Ohio State who was very instrumental in his life.

“What was it like playing for Woody? He was like a second father. A father you didn't have.”

“He talked about relationships. He talked about paying forward 40 years ago. And he had his team and his players assigned from children's hospitals to hospices lined up every Friday to go out for two hours into the community to start paying forward.

‘Don't worry about paying back. Don't wait until you get rich Randy. Start paying forward now!’

“There are many coaches like Coach Hayes even today and back then who talked about paying forward or being leaders. Being involved with the community, doing what the right thing is – instilling character is really what it is.”

Following Gradishar, top Noncommissioned Officers from the Command were recognized. 1st Space Brigade CSM Kevin McGovern and 1SG Douglas Bram from the 1st Space Battalion were presented with the Order of Saint Dominic the patron of Army Space Operations.

They were followed by SFC Luru T. Berry from the 100th Missile Defense Brigade as he was honored with the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara the patroness of the U.S. Air Defense Artillery.

And the signalers honored one of their own with the presentation of the bronze Order of Mercury to SGM Ralph Martin, 1st Space Brigade, while his wife Cindy received the Bronze Wahatchee Award, which is given to individuals who have voluntarily contributed in a significant way to the improvement of the Signal Corps community.

The formal portion of the event came to a close with the transfer of responsibility for the 2010 USASMDC/ARSTRAT Ball in a ceremonial exchange of a “ball sword” between COL Jeffrey Farnsworth, commander of the 1st Space Brigade, (responsible for this year's festivities) and COL Michael Yowell, Commander of the 100th Missile Defense Brigade (GMD.)

The evening's tributes to the Noncommissioned Officer were best put by Campbell when he said, “You really are the pride of our service and I think you are the envy of the world's Armies, what we have in our non-commissioned officer corps. So thank you very much on behalf of the Chief of Staff of the Army for all you have done, you all you are doing today and all that you are going to do in the future.”