

Now, National Forge takes another bold step forward. The employees look forward to the future with a new sense of vigor, and stand ready to face the challenges of the 21st century.

I appreciate this opportunity to recognize the people of National Forge. With their skill, dedication, and confidence they are pursuing the American dream, and I wish them all of the best.

CONGRATULATIONS TO NCOA IN  
CELEBRATING ITS 35-YEAR ANNI-  
VERSARY

**HON. BOB STUMP**

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, August 1, 1995*

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Non-Commissioned Officers Association of the United States of America [NCOA] in celebrating its 35-year anniversary. I have enjoyed working with the members of the NCOA and wish them the very best in the years to come. I want to share with my colleagues the following article which chronicles the history of the association:

NCOA CELEBRATES 35 YEARS OF SERVICE TO  
MILITARY PERSONNEL, VETERANS, AND RE-  
TIRES

SAN ANTONIO, TX, July 29, 1995.—In 1960, several retired U.S. servicemembers founded the Non-Commissioned Officers Association (NCOA) as a vehicle for enlisted veterans and military retirees to discuss military issues. Today, the San Antonio-based association has members around the world and is regarded as one of the most influential military organizations in America.

"NCOA's lobbyists have successfully defended military and veterans entitlements while striving to improve the quality of life for enlisted personnel and their families," says NCOA President Charles R. Jackson, MCPO, USN (Ret). "Additionally, NCOA members, located on nearly every military installation in the U.S. and overseas, have made lasting contributions to their communities."

Thirty-five years ago, Army Sergeant Major Orville L. Vickers broadened the scope of the original vision of NCOA. SGM Vickers included active duty enlisteds from all five branches in the organizational composition. The new association, SGM Vickers declared, would have four primary purposes: fraternal, social, educational and patriotic. It would also provide some commercial benefits and employment services.

On September 20, 1960, just three days after NCOA's charter was issued by the state of Texas, SGM Vickers officially created NCOA. As the Association's first president, SGM Vickers paid his \$12 membership dues and the dues of four NCOs who would form the board of directors. He also deposited \$100 into NCOA's brand-new bank account.

Membership grew slowly for the first year or two, and was confined primarily to the San Antonio area. But within just a few years, the word got out about NCOA and the Association began to build a sizable membership throughout the U.S. and the world.

The 1960s was a period of growth and self-examination for NCOA. Emphasis was placed on public relations, membership recruitment and an exploration of which goals and issues the Association should pursue.

By the 1970s, NCOA had taken its place as a leading advocate of personnel issues per-

taining to active duty military, veterans and retirees. The Association's lobbyists began appearing before congressional committees, defending endangered benefits and supporting progressive programs.

During the 1980's, the Association's membership and influence grew dramatically. NCOA members were now all around the world, in more than 200 chapters. In Washington, D.C., NCOA lobbyists had become well known. Based on their list of legislative achievements, NCOA had earned the respect of congressmen and senators. Perhaps one of their greatest accomplishments came in the mid-1980s, when President Ronald Reagan signed a bill (that had been passed unanimously by both houses of Congress) that granted a federal charter to NCOA. NCOA's federal charter was at that time only the 79th authorized by the U.S. Congress.

Today, NCOA has members and chapters worldwide. It employs a full-time team of registered lobbyists in Washington and provides a national network of service centers. NCOA's job placement assistance and veteran service programs have proven to be valuable assets to its members. Through the Association's Certified Merchant Program, members save dollars through consumer benefits and discounts.

NCOA membership encompasses the entire enlisted force—active duty, reservists, National Guardsmen, veterans and retirees from all branches of the U.S. armed services. Moreover, NCOA has committed itself to improving the lives of others. For instance, chapter members continue to support causes such as Special Olympics, Muscular Dystrophy Association, the NCOA Medical Trust Fund, the NCOA Scholarship Fund and the NCOA Disaster Relief Fund.

"NCOA certainly has come a long way in just three and one-half decades," says Jackson. "And we have lived up to our motto, 'Strength in Unity,' by fighting for servicemembers' benefits, helping them with problems, supporting important programs and providing unparalleled camaraderie. Simultaneously, through our commitment to benevolent acts, we have made a significant contribution to the civilian community," Jackson adds. "NCOA also remains the only national organization exclusively dedicated to representing enlisted servicemembers of all branches of the military."

NCOA's legislative highlights through the years:

In the 1970s, NCOA was:

The only military association to appear before the Veterans Affairs Committee to seek increases in veterans' compensation and DIC rates.

The first military association to appear before the House Budget Committee on behalf of military personnel (to seek increased sea pay).

One of only two military/veterans organizations testifying in opposition to law that barred persons in receipt of military retired pay from collecting unemployment compensation.

The first military association to suggest and testify for the opening of individual retirement accounts to active duty personnel, which later became law.

The first organization to seek a new GI Education Bill for members of the Armed Forces. A bill authored by NCOA was the first of its kind to be introduced in 1979 in Congress.

The only military association actively supporting increases in veterans' burial allowances, which subsequently became law.

In the 1980s, NCOA was:

Successfully recommended a 17 percent targeted pay raise for noncommissioned and petty officers in 1981.

Instrumental in fighting against subsequent military pay reductions and helping attain pay raises.

Influential in getting the Coast Guard's operating budget raised.

The first military association to provide a network of accredited Veterans Services Offices (VSOs) outside the nation's capital.

The first organization to open a veterans service office on a military installation.

The first military association to present its veterans affairs goals to a congressional panel.

Instrumental in preserving reemployment rights and retired pay eligibility for federal civilian employees who perform extended reserve duty in the Armed Forces.

A major player in getting the Senate to accept an increase in coverage for participants in Servicemen's Government Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans' Government Life Insurance (VGLI).

In the 1990s, NCOA has:

Successfully fought for enlisted widows to receive benefits equal to officers' widows under the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation program.

Helped persuade Congress to expand the DoD family dental plan.

Successfully pursued legislation that protects retirement benefits for NCOs and POs who have completed 18 years of service, thus extending to enlisteds a benefit previously enjoyed only by officers.

Requested and received the introduction of the first enlisted involuntary separation pay proposals considered by Congress, which subsequently became law.

Supported the subsequent enactment of voluntary separation pay for enlisted servicemembers and was successful in efforts to have these benefits extended to the Coast Guard, National Guard and military reserves.

Supported the creation of mail-order pharmacies and health care options to serve retirees at base closure sites.

Successfully supported the creation of the Troops to Teachers and the Leadership Employment for Armed Services Personnel (LEAP) programs to assist veterans and retirees in gaining employment.

IN MEMORY OF WILLIAM "BOONE"  
DARDEN

**HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, August 1, 1995*

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on July 22, Florida lost one of its finest citizens. I rise today to commemorate the life of community leader William Darden. Affectionately known as Boone, Mr. Darden had a long and distinguished career in law enforcement and public service. His career culminated in being named police chief in his hometown of Riviera Beach, becoming the first African-American police chief of a major city in Florida.

Born in Atlanta, Mr. Darden began his service to his country as a military policeman in World War II. Following the war, he became one of the first African-American policemen hired by the West Palm Beach Police Department. Throughout his life, he continued opening doors closed to minorities. When he rose to the position of lieutenant, he became the highest ranking African-American police officer in the South. In 1971, he was called in by Riviera Beach city leaders to help quell the devastating violence and calm the atmosphere of