

# Looking for Sam Damon

by Colonel Sean J. Byrne, US Army

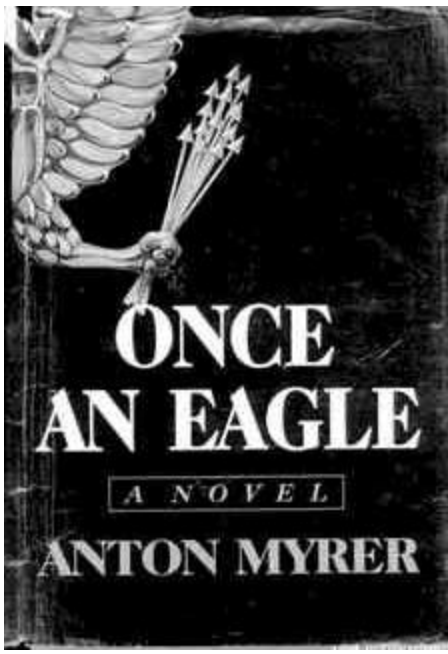
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**S**am Damon is arguably the greatest officer that "never lived." Since introduced in 1968 as the principal character of Anton Myrer's novel *Once an Eagle*, he has been the standard by which a generation of officers has measured all others.<sup>1</sup> A proven combat leader, he understood the human costs and terrible price of battle. Dedication and selfless service, along with a unique grasp of the battlefield and a compassion for his soldiers, were the benchmarks of his life. Although a firm and charismatic leader, he was not afraid to challenge the "establishment" when necessary.

Damon's fictional career spanned enlisted service in the years just before World War I, to service as a general officer during the first years of US involvement in Southeast Asia in the 1960s. The "Damon" character appears to be the composite of a number of officers who served during the years between World Wars I and II. During this period, most officers had similar career patterns and were faced with many of the challenges confronting the Armed Forces today—downsizing, decreasing budgets and support from a government increasingly focused on domestic situations. Officers were faced with career stagnation and had few opportunities for realistic training. Attendance at military schools was key for officers with potential because there "they learned to deal with large-scale administrative and organizational problems while serving as school secretaries, executive officers, quartermasters and the like."<sup>2</sup>

From this background came World War II's leaders and "great captains." Names such as Eisenhower, Bradley and Patton are familiar to even those who have little interest in the military or history. However, in researching this article, I did not look to officers at that level because they have become so familiar and well known over the years that readers generally have preconceived notions about their character and attributes. Rather, I examined the careers and characteristics of many officers from the period who, although not as familiar as the war's great captains, exhibited many of the same qualities as Damon. During my research, I found an officer, Clarence Huebner, who not only had a similar career pattern as Damon, but also had a similar background and possessed many of Damon's characteristics. This article provides career summaries of both officers and compares them using the Army's Core Values and the traits identified in the US Army War College's (AWC's) "A Ride With Some Captains" course as its criteria.

## Sam Damon



Sam Damon was born in 1898, a Nebraska farmer's son. His father died when Sam was just a boy, leaving him to help his mother support the family. Although recognized as the top student and athlete in his high school, he had to work as a hotel night clerk during his school years. While still a teenager, Damon believed his destiny was to enter the Army and that he would be called on to do great things for his country in its time of need. He initially felt his calling was to attend West Point and was the local congressman's alternate appointee to attend the US Military Academy (USMA) after graduation. However, even though he had a "guarantee" that he would be the nominee the following year, he enlisted in the Army in 1916 based on family financial concerns. He was initially assigned to a cavalry unit on the Southwest US border. Smart and athletic, he was soon recognized by his chain of command as a young man with a future. During this period, his unit deployed to Mexico as part of a US show of force against Mexican rebels who had violated US border integrity and wreaked havoc on several US border towns. Although he did not see actual combat, he saw firsthand its effects

and the pain and suffering it brought.

Barely a year later, as a young sergeant, he deployed to France to fight in World War I. Only 19 years old, he was already a proven "old timer" and responsible for a platoon of new recruits as they prepared to go into battle. Because he had shown his mettle in both garrison and training environments, his men trusted him and had great confidence in his abilities.

During one of their initial actions, Damon, after his company chain of command had been killed, led an attack against a key German-held road intersection. In capturing the building overlooking the crossroads, he single-handedly killed all the German occupants before they could notify their higher headquarters. Although deep in enemy territory, he held the crossroads, and as the battle wore on, his small force of six soldiers captured numerous Germans and allowed American soldiers to pass through the area. His actions turned the battle and saved the lives of a battalion's soldiers who would have been massacred had the building remained in German hands. Although his platoon had performed remarkably well, his battalion had been decimated. His battalion commander, Major Caldwell, recognized his actions and recommended him for the Medal of Honor. He subsequently received the award from General John J. Pershing, who singled Damon out as "one of my nine names in my own Pantheon of heroes . . . one of nine."<sup>3</sup> Praise such as this made Damon a man to be watched in the future.

Caldwell saw significant potential in young Damon and, due to the loss of so many leaders, awarded him with a battlefield commission. Their careers would cross numerous times over the years, with Caldwell not only becoming Damon's role model and mentor, but also his father-in-law.

Damon saw much more action during the war. As a company commander, he led his unit from the front during a number of major battles. He was severely wounded but able to return to the front. By war's end, he had been promoted to major and would have been a lieutenant colonel had hostilities gone on longer. At war's end he considered leaving the service. However, Caldwell convinced him that hostilities would arise again and that he would be needed. Damon stayed in the Army and faced the tough interwar years.

After recovering from his war wounds, Damon returned to the states and reverted to his permanent rank of first lieutenant. For the most part, he spent the interwar years in remote outposts. Although he did not

attend senior-level schools, he was self-motivated and fortunate in that he spent these years in troop-related assignments where he learned the skills he would need for the struggles ahead.

Damon was often viewed as a renegade with a number of strikes against him. First, he was a "mustang," an officer up from the ranks that many "old Army" officers would not accept into their community. In his dealings with many of these officers, Damon's concerns for the well being of the enlisted soldiers were often viewed as a carryover from his past and being too close to the soldiers. Second, many were jealous of his World War I record and the awards he had received. Some felt that he had been too close to his battalion commander and that his awards were inflated. Others were jealous because they either had not made it to Europe during the war or, if they had, had not received similar recognition. A third strike against him was that some perceived his marriage to Caldwell's daughter as a vehicle to better himself, not for what it was, a marriage for love.

A fourth strike that would follow Damon throughout his career was his attitude. He was outspoken and saw little or no gray area in anything he did or said. In today's environment, he would have had great difficulty understanding the concept of being "politically correct." His saving grace in this area was that when he chose the battle to fight, he could back up his words with action. However, his self-righteous attitude did influence evaluations, duty assignments and school selections. Similar to General George S. Patton Jr., high-level staff positions during the interwar years could have been his undoing because of his lack of political correctness.

He was fortunate during the interwar years to spend virtually all of his time with troops. Although he had commanded a company and been in line for battalion command during World War I, reverting back to first lieutenant gave him the opportunity to further develop his leadership skills and to command again at the company level, allowing him to master the technical and doctrinal side of his profession.

During this period, he also attended the US Army Infantry School (USAIS) when Lieutenant Colonel George C. Marshall was the assistant commandant. Marshall stressed the theories of war less than his predecessors. His emphasis was on methods and principles of command, and he looked for leaders who could react to fluid, changing situations and not necessarily textbook solutions. Marshall understood the need for simplicity in techniques, and theory took a backseat to practical application. Damon thrived in this environment.

During the mid-1930s, as war with Germany and Japan was pending, Damon was assigned as a military observer with the Chinese guerrilla forces as they fought the Japanese. For two years, Damon had a firsthand view of the Japanese in battle and of the Chinese as they fought a guerrilla action against the Japanese aggressors. He learned the theory and nature of war from the oriental perspective and through practical application. Regrettably, when he returned he was again seen as a nonconformist, and his views were discounted and his reports ignored.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Damon was an infantry battalion commander stationed in California. He spent the early days of World War II training soldiers and then, as his command became proficient and ready for combat, he saw it split to form the nucleus of other units. As the fighting in the Pacific intensified, he was again called to lead in battle.

He initially assumed regimental command in the Pacific Theater during the fighting in New Guinea. During intense combat, the brigade commander was returned to the states for medical reasons and Damon replaced him. Damon subsequently became the assistant division commander and later assumed division command. His promotions and duty assignments were based on his duty performance and

leadership abilities-not politics. In fact, after his initial successes as a regimental and brigade commander, he was summoned for an office call with General Douglas MacArthur that went really bad. After Damon told MacArthur he should not have left Bataan, but rather should have stayed with his men, Damon thought he was going to be relieved of command. However, because Damon was such a successful combat commander, he remained in command-but the moment he failed in any action, many people, waiting in the wings, would ensure he was removed in disgrace as fast as possible.

Damon was as successful in combat during World War II, as he had been in World War I, because he was not only a combat leader but also an extraordinary operator and planner. He visualized the ongoing battle and the enemy's reactions to his plans at both the tactical and strategic levels. He was able to develop branches and sequels in his mind while others were still trying to comprehend the basic plans.

Damon also had the ability, in both peacetime and combat environments, to lead and motivate his soldiers to accomplish things they did not even want to attempt. Damon galvanized them into action and was with them every step of the way. They knew that what he wanted was the right thing to do. He was an incredibly forceful personality but did not lead through intimidation; rather, he inspired his subordinates. It was clear that although he maintained the highest standards, he was close to his soldiers and subordinate leaders. They knew he was not out for glory; he just wanted to get the job done as fast and successfully as possible while sustaining the fewest casualties possible.

Throughout his career, from the days in France during World War I until the end of his career in Southeast Asia in 1963, Damon was continually confronted by his nemesis-Courtney Massengale. Massengale was everything that Damon was not and did not want to be. He was polished, had served in all the right places (usually at the headquarters level, not with troops) but epitomized the ticket-punching careerist who failed to understand the meaning of selfless service and was willing to sacrifice almost anything to better his career.

Throughout the novel, as their careers continually cross, Massengale is always the senior and attempts to use his position and rank to co-opt Damon, and therein lies the novel's thrust. Massengale considers war a game for abstract strategy rather than for human involvement. He feels he must dominate Damon or, if failing at that, destroy him. Their personal confrontations provide insight into the novel's key personalities and also shed light on the internal workings of the interwar military and how politics and mentoring affected its leaders.

## **Clarence Ralph Huebner**

Clarence Ralph Huebner was born in Bushton, Kansas, on 24 November 1888. He graduated from Grand Island, Nebraska, Business College in 1909 and enlisted in the Army, serving in the 18th Infantry Division (ID) from 1910 to 1916. After commissioning in the infantry in 1916, he served with the 1st ID, American Expeditionary Forces in World War I. He was wounded in the Beaumont sector in April 1918 and again during the Aisne-Marne offensive in July 1918. After the war, he was an instructor at USAIS from 1920 to 1922, and graduated from the US Army Command and General Staff School in 1925. He returned as an instructor at USAIS from 1925 to 1928, and graduated from AWC in 1929. He was an instructor at the US Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) from 1929 to 1933, a USAIS board member from 1933 to 1934 and worked with the chief, USAIS from 1934 to 1938. He served with the 19th ID in Hawaii from August 1938 to July 1940 and was War Department General Staff Training Branch chief from 1940 to 1942. He was promoted to brigadier general in February 1942 and was Army Field Forces Training director from 1942 to 1943.

In March 1943 Huebner was promoted to major general and assigned as 1st ID commanding general from August 1943 to December 1944. He was commanding general of V Corps from January 1945 to September 1945. Assignments after the war included chief of staff, US Forces in the European Theater of Operations from 1946 to 1947 and deputy commander in chief of US European Command from 1947 to 1950. He retired in November 1950. During his prestigious career, he was awarded two Distinguished Service Crosses, three Distinguished Service Medals, the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts. Huebner died 23 August 1972.<sup>4</sup>

Like Damon, Huebner was a product of a middle class upbringing in the Midwest. After graduation from high school, he attended business school, where he became an expert accountant, stenographer and typist. These skills enabled him to become a court reporter and, at age 22, a moderately successful young man. Then in 1910, he did the unthinkable—he enlisted in the peacetime US Army.

**Generals Clarence R. Huebner (left) and Terry da la Mesa Allen of the 1st Infantry Division (ID) at Huebner's assumption of command, Sicily, 8 August 1943. The following year in northwest Europe, Huebner met Allen again when Allen's 104th ID took over the 1st ID's part of the line at Aachen near the German-Dutch border.**



His background made him unique, much as he would be in today's Army. After he completed basic training, he was assigned to the 18th ID, Fort Laramie, Wyoming. Fortunately, he remained with the unit for the next six years as it moved from Wyoming to various locations throughout the southwestern United States. He came into his own as he learned to soldier and "served as company clerk, mess sergeant and supply sergeant. He was one of the regiment's most efficient soldiers, best rifle shot and most neatly dressed. His devotion to duty soon attracted the attention of his officers, and he was asked whether he wanted to take the examination for a commission."<sup>5</sup> Concerned that his background had not adequately prepared him, regiment officers coached him and he passed the tests and was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1916. He then went to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to the USAIS and completed the course in April 1917, just as the United States entered the war against Germany. A month later he was on the way to France, in command of a 1st ID rifle company.

In France, Huebner trained his company of raw recruits for a few months before they moved up the line. In March 1918, his company moved into the Beaumont sector north of Toul, where he was wounded and initially reported as killed. A month later he returned to head his company, and when his battalion commander was killed in the ensuing battle, Huebner took command of the unit and performed the actions that brought him the Distinguished Service Cross: "For three days . . . he withstood German assaults under intense bombardment, heroically exposing himself to fire constantly in order to command his battalion effectively, and although his command lost half its officers and 30 percent of its men, he held the position and prevented a break in the line at that point."<sup>6</sup>

A mere three months later, in June 1918, he was promoted to major, wounded again and awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster to his Distinguished Service Cross. Returning to command in time for battle near Saizerais, action around Beaumont, the St. Mihiel attack and the Meuse-Argonne offensive, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel in October 1918 and assumed command of the 28th Infantry Regiment. Several

regimental majors had been captains before the war, when he had been a sergeant.<sup>7</sup>

"His gallantry, proficiency in command and his rapid rise in grade made him one to remember, one who had passed the test of courage. He was noticed by Pershing, who later sent him to Leavenworth somewhat ahead of his time-he was honor graduate there-by Brigadier General Charles P. Summerall, who pushed him toward the AWC, and by General John Hines, who, as the Army chief of staff, befriended Huebner."<sup>8</sup> He also came to the attention of Marshall, who would lead the Army as its chief of staff during World War II.

After a year of occupation duty in Germany, Huebner returned to the United States, where he reverted to his permanent grade of captain and spent the better part of the ensuing 20 years in regimental duties, attending the Infantry Advanced Course, CGSC and AWC. He also had three tours of duty as an instructor at service schools. This career path was not unusual during the interwar years. However, it put him in good stead for increased responsibilities when World War II began.

When the war started, he was a brigadier general serving as the Army Field Forces director of training. He remained in that position until March 1943, when he was reassigned to North Africa as the theater G3. However, after barely a month in the position, he was reassigned as the deputy chief of staff for the combined 21st Army Group Headquarters, under the command of General Sir Harold Alexander. He joined the staff at a critical time. US forces had been defeated at the battle of Kasserine Pass, and "Alexander, like many British officers, missed few opportunities to disparage the fighting ability of the American troops in North Africa."<sup>9</sup> Alexander was loath to give the Americans significant missions, which was causing considerable problems. At Eisenhower's direction, Huebner joined Alexander's staff to prevent further favoritism based on nationality and to provide a genuinely Allied outlook.<sup>10</sup> After a particularly nasty incident involving Alexander and Huebner over Alexander's continued favoritism toward British units in the Sicily Campaign, Huebner was reassigned, without prejudice. Huebner had "done the right thing" in standing up for US forces, and the situation had become untenable. Huebner was then reassigned to command the 1st ID.

Huebner could not have come into command at a more difficult time. He replaced Major General Terry Allen, who although successful in combat and extremely popular with his subordinates, was being relieved because General Omar Bradley, the corps commander, believed Allen had allowed the discipline to sag to a level where the division was not capable of performing its mission. This was a critical issue because the 1st ID was scheduled to be a spearhead unit in the invasion of Europe at Normandy. Huebner's arrival was a traumatic event for the division. Huebner and Allen "were the complete opposite in personality, attitude towards discipline and manner of operation. Allen enjoyed a first name, backslapping informal relationship with his officers and men and was loved by them. Huebner, on the other hand, was stiff and formal in his relationships with subordinates, but earned their respect." <sup>11</sup>

Although Huebner had previously served in the division during World War I, from lieutenant to colonel and was a charter member of the division, he was seen as an outsider.<sup>12</sup> He "quickly abolished the informality of his predecessors and within a brief time, however, Huebner had overcome this handicap, won the affection of his troops and placed his own stamp on them. They were shaped once again into a cohesive, top notch and highly disciplined unit."<sup>13</sup> But this is not to say the process was easy. Bradley said that "a more sensitive man might have cracked under the strain, for it was not until after the Normandy invasion, one year later, that the last resentful adherents to Terry Allen conceded Huebner the right to wear the Big Red One."<sup>14</sup>

Like Patton before him, when Huebner took command he put his own mark on the division. He not only initiated a marksmanship program for the division, he was the primary instructor. So successful was Huebner in putting his mark on the division and raising standards that, in addition to his own 1st ID, he was given two regiments from the 29th ID for the assault on Omaha Beach on D-Day-where the landings were the hardest and the German resistance was the strongest.

"Allied intelligence had discovered, too late to change the invasion plans, that the strong German 352d Division had moved into the Omaha Beach area. The resistance of these troops almost prevented the Americans from getting a foothold. On D-Day Huebner's men were along a single strip of sand and shingle, pinned down by severe enemy fire when he decided to go ashore himself. It was already 1600, and it looked as though the Omaha landings were about to be a complete failure. . . . He later said this was the most critical moment of his life. Unless his men could get off the beach and into the interior, Omaha would be a tragic disaster.

"Somehow his appearance on the beach worked magic. His assistant division commanders, Willard G. Wyman and Norman G. Cota, and all the regimental commanders had been trying to get their men forward. Suddenly, with Huebner himself on the scene, things began to improve. How can one explain the way a single man's presence will galvanize a large-scale movement into successful activity? This is the intangible quality of leadership at work, what the soldier's entire life points toward, and seldom has it been displayed to clearer advantage. For his work that day Huebner later received the Oak Leaf Cluster to his Distinguished Service Medal with the statement: `The success of the greatest amphibious operation in history against a strongly fortified and almost impregnable coastal barrier was in large measure due to the organizing ability, indomitable determination and inspiring leadership of General Huebner.'"15

After expanding the beachhead, the division took part in Operation *Cobra*, took the strategic town of Mortain, sped across Belgium and fought in the Aachen and Huertgen Forest battles. In January 1945, Huebner assumed V Corps command and led his forces in taking the Roer dams and crossing the Rhine into Germany.

He returned to the United States with his corps headquarters immediately upon hostilities ending in Europe to prepare for deployment to the Pacific. When the war in the Pacific ended, he became the Army Ground Forces G3 before returning to Europe for occupation duties.

"In his last few years of service in Germany, Huebner found that the administrative skills he had learned so long ago were still of value. He eliminated the dangerously slack postwar discipline, instituted a model training program, abolished segregated Negro units and integrated black troops into all formations, improved the education offerings of the Army's schools in Europe and took effective action against the black market. He retired in 1950, one of the best-loved officers ever to wear the uniform of the US Army."16

In Huebner, I believe I have found a Sam Damon. His background, traits, characteristics, training expertise, grasp of the battlefield and concern for his soldiers are uncannily Damon-like. He was a unique soldier in an Army filled with unique soldiers. "Of all the great American soldiers of the 20th century, including many far better known to the public, none better exemplifies the fundamental strength of a citizen army in a democratic society-the career open to talent."17

## Comparisons

In researching this article, it became abundantly clear that there may have been a number of "Sam Damons" that author Anton Myrer could have used as his model. At the outset, this project appeared relatively simple when initially conceived-review the Army's World War II general officers and identify some good candidates. The project soon became overwhelming when its true magnitude became clear-the Army had over 1,275 general officers during the war.<sup>18</sup> There were clearly too many good candidates, most of whom are little remembered, and few, except the most famous, have either been written about or have left memoirs. It became obvious almost from the start that it would not be possible to thoroughly review every candidate.

I had always thought Damon's career was somewhat unique. However, I was soon to learn that while Damon, and subsequently Huebner, were unique individuals, their careers were very similar to those of many of their contemporaries. The only difference may have been the opportunity to shine and to have the level of exposure where they were recognized and their talents further utilized. Napoleon reportedly said that every officer has a field marshal's baton in his knapsack-however, only a chosen few have the opportunity to use it. Damon, in fiction, and Huebner in real life not only had the talents but seized the opportunity.

In his book *Twentieth Century Warrior: The Life and Service of Major General Edwin D. Patrick*, Wilson A. Heefner provides a good analysis of the Army officer corps during the interwar years and of the 140 men who commanded infantry, armor and airborne divisions in World War II combat.<sup>19</sup> After review, it is clear that Damon and Huebner may have actually been more the norm rather than exception.

- Thirty-three percent were from the Midwest.
- Thirty-seven percent were USMA graduates. Fifty-one percent of division commanders were not academy graduates. Neither Damon nor Huebner was an academy grad.
- Ninety-five percent of division commanders attended CGSC. Huebner did, Damon did not.
- Ten percent of CGSC graduates attended senior service college, and of those, 50 percent became general officers. Additionally, 70 percent of the combat division commanders were senior service college graduates. Huebner was, Damon was not.
- Seventy-five percent of combat division commanders had service on the general staff. Huebner did, Damon apparently did not.
- The median age of those assuming division command was 50. Damon was 45 and Huebner, 54.

Military education played an important role during the interwar years. "Even though the interwar Army had few battalion-size and larger units, severely limiting an officer's ability to apply the command and staff lessons learned at the schools, the Army compensated by assigning the most promising of those officers to serve on the faculties of the schools or with regiments assigned to the schools."<sup>20</sup> The most famous of those schools was the USAIS from 1927 to 1932, when Marshall served as the school's assistant commandant. The school was indeed "the cradle of many of World War II's greatest field commanders," among them Collins, Bradley, Stilwell and Van Fleet.<sup>21</sup> Damon was a student during this period and Huebner served on the faculty.

Damon's interwar career was unique only in that he did not attend either CGSC or AWC and probably did not serve on a high-level staff or have service school instructor duty. While Damon was slightly younger than the median age for division commanders, this was not that unusual. A number of general officers, including James Gavin of the 82d Airborne Division, moved from regimental to division command as vacancies occurred and commanded divisions before they were 45. In analyzing the ages of US Army World War II generals, their ages ranged from roughly 34 to 77.<sup>22</sup> If charted on a bell curve diagram, both Damon's and Huebner's ages would be within the center quadrant and not statistical

anomalies.

Analyzing these two officers also involves considerable conjecture. Once an *Eagle* involves a fictional character, and the author provides an excellent overview of episodes in Damon's "life." However, there are considerable gaps in the story. It is unclear, for instance, whether or not Damon served on a high-level staff or as a service school instructor. Additionally, because much of the book concerns the character and attributes of Damon, it is easy to draw conclusions in those areas about him. However, it is not so easy to make the same conclusions concerning Huebner. His career is relatively easy to outline. However, little has been written about him specifically besides a chapter in *Masters of the Art of Command* by Martin Blumenson and James Stokesbury, and a master's thesis written by Robert J. Rogers while attending CGSC in 1965.<sup>23</sup> He is also referenced in a number of other books, but generally he is little more than a footnote. Rogers' thesis is significant because he was able to interview not only Huebner, but also a number of officers who served with him in the 1st ID.

Clearly there are more similarities than dissimilarities in the careers of these two officers. The [figure](#) is a comparison of their career patterns.

## Traits of the Great Captains

During the AWC course "A Ride With Some Great Captains," a number of traits were found to have been common among Hannibal, Alexander the Great, Gustavus Adolfus, Frederick the Great and Napoleon. This section discusses Damon and Huebner in light of those traits.

**Robust body and mind.** Physically, both exhibited this trait. It is recorded that both were top-notch athletes as youths and maintained top physical fitness condition throughout their careers. Damon is cited for his physical fitness on numerous occasions and was specifically noted for his abilities in field marches and combat. Huebner is similarly noted, especially in leading extensive training programs. He was visible at the lowest level and participated in every physically demanding activity he required his lowest-ranking soldiers to perform, even when he was a division commander-leading by example.

It appears both were exceptionally intelligent. Huebner was the distinguished graduate of his CGSC class. Damon, although short on formal education, is cited as having been the top student in his high school class and having excelled at the Infantry Officer's Course. The novel further details Damon's individual program for self-improvement, which devoted most of his free time to reading and studying military, strategic, tactical and historical writings. *Once an Eagle* further details Damon's battlefield grasp and ability to visualize and identify operational branches and sequels.

**Administrative ability.** This is a key skill because quite often a major factor of battlefield success is the administrative and logistic support and planning that preceded the battle. Huebner's business school experiences as a young man before he entered the Army clearly helped make him a successful noncommissioned officer. Additionally, his skills in this area are specifically cited in the book *Masters of the Art of Command* as being a key to his success in post-World War II duties in Europe.<sup>24</sup> Little is mentioned of Damon's skills in this area. However, he is cited for his knowledge of regulations and doctrine.

**Physical courage.** Although awards do not always tell the entire story, both were highly decorated for their personal courage and actions during both world wars. Clearly they had individual courage. Neither is cited as being reckless, and both are noted for their concern about their soldiers' safety and efforts to minimize casualties. While physical courage may have been less essential in modern times because

leaders were usually more distanced from the front lines than in earlier days, moral courage was necessary. Both Damon and Huebner had the courage to make the tough decisions in the midst of battle or to challenge the powers that be when necessary.

**Health.** Both suffered serious wounds during World War I. However, it does not appear there were any severe long-term effects from these wounds. Both are noted throughout their careers for their robust health and high-level physical fitness.

**Youth.** Although youth may not have been necessary at the most senior levels, as evidenced by Marshall and MacArthur during World War II, it was essential at the division and corps levels. Both Damon and Huebner were roughly the same age as their contemporary division commanders.

**Character.** Character is the ability to know what is possible, to know what one wants and then to have the courage and determination to get it. Both men exemplified this characteristic. As young men in World War I, they took charge and assumed command when their chain of command was decimated. Throughout their careers, they stood up for what was right and when necessary stuck their necks out.

**Possess a fighting spirit.** Throughout their careers, both fought and led from the front. Their stories are filled with incidents where their leadership on the battlefield inspired their subordinates to accomplish the task regardless of the situation.

## Army Core Values

The seven characteristics described below are the values that guide today's Army. These are the traits we strive for and expect from our soldiers. As detailed above, both Damon and Huebner exemplified these traits.

**Loyalty.** Establishes the correct ordering of our obligations and commitments, starting with the Constitution, then the US Army, the unit, family/friends and finally self. Unswerving allegiance to the Constitution and the lawful government prevents us from misplacing our loyalties.

**Duty.** Delineates the sum total of all laws, rules, and so forth, that make up our organizational, civic and moral obligations. Our values originate with duty because we expect individuals to, as a minimum, fulfill their obligations. We often expect individuals to exceed their duty, especially in ethical matters. The nation's highest award, the Medal of Honor, imparts the notion of an individual acting above and beyond the call of duty.

**Respect.** Denotes the regard and recognition of the absolute dignity that every human possesses. Specifically, respect indicates compassion and consideration of others, including sensitivity to and regard for the feelings and needs of others.

**Selfless service.** Service before self signifies the proper ordering of priorities. The welfare of the nation and the organization come before the individual's. While the focus is on service to the nation, the idea also requires that the servicemember properly take care of family and self.

**Honor.** Circumscribes the complex of all the values that make up the public code for the Army or for any organization. These values include: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage. Significantly, honor provides the motive for the action and demands adherence to a public moral code, not protection of a reputation.

**Integrity.** Encompasses the sum total of a person's set of values-his private moral code. A breach of any of these values will damage the individual's integrity. Integrity, closely related to the word *integer*, really refers to a notion of completeness, wholeness and uniqueness.

**Personal courage.** Depicts the premier military virtue that enables us to persevere despite fear, danger or adversity, no matter what the context happens to be-physical or moral. Personal courage includes the notion of taking responsibility for decisions and actions. Additionally, it involves the ability to perform critical self-assessment, to confront new ideas and to change.

In the last paragraph of the chapter in *Masters of the Art of Command* concerning Huebner, the authors provide their final critique. With minimal changes, their comments could have been written to describe the fictional combat leader Damon, because both were "among the finest young combat officers of World War I . . . grew to become one of the outstanding division . . . commanders of World War II. He combined decisiveness and aggressiveness with a sure tactical touch. He demonstrated unsurpassed leadership in training and in battle; he probably brought up-trained, educated and developed to maturity-more young officers who themselves became general officers than any other commander. He was, in the highest sense of the term and in the genuine tradition of the United States Army, a leader of men."<sup>25</sup>

On a more personal note, I first became acquainted with Sam Damon while serving as a second lieutenant at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, during the late 1970s. Television miniseries were then in vogue, and *Once an Eagle* was serialized by NBC. During the evenings *Once an Eagle* was shown, all activities that could be controlled were halted on Fort Bragg so we could run home and watch Damon's trials and tribulations. The following morning all the junior officers gathered for breakfast in their mess halls after physical training to discuss the previous evening's show, scene by scene. Damon became our mentor. While he was not perfect and we could pick out his flaws, we saw in him what we wanted to be and, more important, what we could possibly be as officers. He motivated us to raise both our expectations and standards. In his nemesis, Courtney Massengale, we saw the worst of the officer corps-and what we would do our best to fight against throughout our careers.

Over the years Damon has often served as my example when counseling junior officers and during formal officer professional development sessions. I have given copies of *Once an Eagle* as gifts so many times, that I find myself looking for paperback copies every time I go into a used book store. I have been a proponent of, and advocate for, Damon for nearly 20 years. Researching this article provided me with another role model-Clarence Huebner. It also reinforced the fact that our Army is, and always has been, made up of exceptional individuals who, though not readily recognizable to the general public, stand ready to answer the nation's call to duty. **MR**

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  2. Wilson A. Heefner, *Twentieth Century Warrior: The Life and Service of Major General Edwin D. Patrick* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Company), 149.
  3. Myrer, 335.
  4. R. Manning Ancell and Christine M. Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary of World War II Generals and Flag Officers* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 158-59.
  5. Martin Blumenson and James Stokesbury, *Masters of the Art of Command* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1975), 165.
  6. Blumenson, 166.
  7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., 167.
  9. Robert J. Rogers, *A Study in Leadership in the First Infantry Division During World War II: Terry De La Mesa Allen and Clarence Ralph Huebner* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, Masters in Military Arts and Science thesis, 1965), 56.
  10. Blumenson, 168.
  11. Rogers, 90.
  12. Ibid., 56.
  13. Blumenson, 170.
  14. Omar N. Bradley, *A Soldier's Story* (New York: Holt, 1951), 157.
  15. Blumenson, 170-71.
  16. Ibid., 172.
  17. Ibid., 164.
  18. Ancell and Miller, 674-75.
  19. Heefner, 146-74, 205.
  20. Ibid., 149.
  21. Ibid.
  22. Ancell and Miller, 674-75.
  23. Rogers.
  24. Blumenson, 172.
  25. Ibid.
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*Colonel Sean J. Byrne is commander, 8th Personnel Command (PERSCOM), Seoul, Korea. He received a B.S. from the University of Detroit and an M.B.A. from the University of Utah. He is a graduate of the US Marine Corps Command and Staff College and the US Army War College. He has served in a variety of command and staff positions in the Continental United States, including chief, Enlisted Distribution Division, PERSCOM, Alexandria, Virginia; commander, 82d Personnel Services Battalion, Fort Bragg, North Carolina; deputy commander, 18th Personnel Group, Fort Bragg; Deputy G1, 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg; and military aide to the President, Washington, D.C.*

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