

The Ordnance Order of Samuel Sharpe

BY CAPTAIN JEFFREY J. QUAIL

In my experience supporting a field artillery battalion, I have seen firsthand the rich tradition of the Order of Saint Barbara. So much emphasis is put into this recognition that the field artillery branch even holds a ball in her honor that focuses specifically on inducting deserving Soldiers into the order. Many field artillery Soldiers strive for their entire careers to be inducted and place emphasis on the honor above other awards.

Each branch of the Army has a special award given to Soldiers who demonstrate outstanding characteristics and qualities. Among these honors are the Infantry's Order of Saint Maurice, Armor's Order of Saint George, Signal's Bronze Order of Mercury, Quartermaster's Order of Saint Martin, and Transportation's Honorable Order of Saint Christopher. The Ordnance Corps also has a special, but little known, order it reserves for its outstanding Soldiers.

The Order of Samuel Sharpe

First introduced in May 1994 by the United States Army Ordnance Corps Association (USAOCA), the Order of Samuel Sharpe ensures the proper recognition of Ordnance personnel who have demonstrated the highest standards of integrity and moral character, displayed an outstanding professional competence, served the Army Ordnance Corps with selflessness, and contributed to the promotion of the Ordnance Corps in ways that stand out to the recipient's seniors, subordinates, and peers.

The order was named for the first master gunner in what is now the United States. Samuel Sharpe was born in England around 1610 and, by the age of 18, was charged with the "five pieces of ordnance" by the Court of Assistants in London. Later, as a member of the Council of the Plantation in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, he was officially named the "Master Gunner of Ordnance" and, according to the Army Ordnance Corps website, was charged with the care of the "ordnance, shot, powder, match, ladles, sponges, wormes, cartridges, armes, fire-works and the rest of the gunners."

The Samuel Sharpe medal depicts an eagle holding a flintlock rifle, surrounded by oak leaves, with a shell and flame overhead. The eagle represents America's freedom, which has been defended faithfully by members of the corps since 1812. The flintlock rifle represents the Ordnance Corps' beginnings and the materiel support provided by Ordnance personnel in both peace

and war. The oak leaves represent the strength and resolve of the Ordnance Corps to stand the test of time. The shell and flame represent the unleashed energy of the Ordnance Corps.

Why the Obscurity?

While attending the Combined Logistics Captains Career Course, I talked to many Ordnance officers who did not know that the Ordnance Corps has this award. The Ordnance's Order of Samuel Sharpe is relatively new, which may explain its oversight by many Ordnance Corps members.

In my 6 years of active-duty service, I have neither been a part of nor even heard of a Samuel Sharpe ball. Talking with other Ordnance members, I have found that I am not alone in this. Little information is available about Samuel Sharpe on the Internet or in the library other than in a handful of unit newsletters announcing a new member. I received tremendous help from the USAOCA, but I believe that it should be the responsibility of each Ordnance member to know our corps' history.

Any member of the Ordnance Corps may nominate a deserving candidate for the Ordnance Order of Samuel Sharpe award. The approval authority is the nominee's superior Ordnance Corps general officer or colonel. When there is not an ordnance general or colonel available in the nominee's organization, the nomination must be endorsed by the nominator's commander and submitted to the USAOCA. The association will then review and coordinate approval by the Chief of Ordnance.

I encourage each member of the Ordnance Corps to nominate all those who are deserving of this award and show the rest of the Army that we too are proud of our corps and the countless contributions it has made to our Nation. Go Ordnance!

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