



Several interesting pieces in this issue should strike your fancy, but for my money, the letters are once again the magazine's best part. That often seems to be the case, but have you ever wondered why the letters are often more engaging than the well-referenced and researched articles which appear later?

I think the answer is that guys with strong feelings about issues which affect all of us have laid their souls bare and given us the benefit of their insights. These insights then form the basis for our own thinking and further development of the ideas. This phenomenon occurs in issue after issue of this magazine. While the letters aren't always the most polished of presentations, they are nothing if not honest attempts to help us practice our craft better. What more could we all want from our magazine and our fellow readers? We have soldiers from sergeant to colonel willing to say what is on their minds. That is special. That is strength.

I find the letters especially rich, because even though most of them are pointing out faults somewhere (you have to have an issue to be moved to write), they indicate that there is much more going on than worried, paralysis-inducing, woe-is-us hand-wringing. Sure, lots of folks are concerned with where developments are taking our Army, our Armored Force, their unit, and so on. They should be, if they care about our profession. But let's face an unsettling condition of mid 1998: we all know guys who get one or two under their belt at the club, or who have their 32 ounces of java before 0800, or who have breathed too much diesel and turbine exhaust who are sounding Chicken Little, sky-is-falling alarms. That behavior is counterproductive and only spreads panic when panic is in no way warranted.

Not to panic? Correct. Here is one reason why not. Read this issue's "Commander's Hatch" to understand a little of the thought process that went into the new heavy division design. This solution, which many of us will have to employ in future conflicts, is good enough to win. It certainly was not crafted by mindless automatons who don't care about us in the turrets. Our chief of armor and cavalry, whose strong suit is muddy boots training, was in on the process, as were many other similarly "real" guys. Even if you aren't happy with some aspects of the new design — maybe you want to retain the six-tube mortar platoon, vice the four-tube

platoon of the future — it is nearly time to salute smartly, say "Yes, sir!" move out, and draw fire. Our advocates, the branch chiefs, had a tough job, and they knew that they had to make compromises.

Not to panic? I'll give you another reason. Whether you think Colonel Swan (in the second letter this issue) is right or not, we have been at a critical juncture before in our branch history, and we have prevailed. I just re-read some of George S. Patton's thinking, published over the years in this magazine. Beginning when he was a lieutenant and continuing later during his career as a field grade officer, he too complained about things, but he didn't spread panic. Quite the contrary. He offered solutions to the conditions and issues of his era (some of which weren't all that good, frankly, given our 1990s hindsight). Some of those conditions ring amazingly true today. But read this quote from his article in this magazine in 1916, and you be the judge:

*Another point which has already been mentioned in the press in accounting for the lack of news regarding the tactical use of cavalry from the war abroad, is that war correspondents have rarely had access to the distant and varied fields of cavalry combat; and perforce, they have written about the work of the guns, whose decisive effects on the battlefield, they can readily observe and appreciate. Yet their incessant chatter has made many, who should know better, think that wars can be decided by soulless machines, rather than by the blood and anguish of brave men."*

— "A Defense of the Saber," *Journal of the U.S. Cavalry Association*, July, 1916, pp. 49-50.

So, when you hear gloom and doom from your wingman, do not succumb to it yourself. Instead, try to see the plus side of our force today and get the most out of your opportunities. Then maybe, just maybe, like the people in Arlo Guthrie's "Alice's Restaurant," others will start picking it up, humming it, and before you know it, we'll have a bona fide *movement* on our hands. That is the kind of infectious attitude that will see us, our soldiers, and our units carry on, with a spirit conducive to success, as we approach the millennium LD.

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