



Was it Good for You?

For the most part, the mail that comes into *ARMOR* is complimentary about what we are doing with your magazine. You generally like the mix of articles and largely approve of the “tad of this and tad of that” recipe, rather than a thematic-based approach. You like having some pictures to break up the text, and you uniformly enjoy Jody Harmon’s artistry. We always appreciate that kind of warm and fuzzy feedback.

However, there is also the occasional reader who doesn’t like what is going on within these covers. Either the mix of material isn’t right, or we aren’t focusing on the correct issues, or we’ve committed some other fault. We find that cold and prickly feedback less comfortable, but every bit as useful.

We need to hear from you periodically, thumbs up or thumbs down, to ensure that we keep our eyes focused on the leveling bubble. If we have the formula pretty much right, let us know. If we have done bad things to the poochie, by all means let us know, so we can effect change if necessary. We can effect change easily, if you want it, and the status quo is no problem, either.

When criticizing, there are a couple of factors about the operation everyone should keep in mind:

— Other than those writers who are tasked to write schoolhouse articles, all of the authors are volunteering to share their opinions. Some of them you will not agree with; some of them will spur you to action; some of them will make you wish you had written it down first, because you had been saying the same thing for the last couple of years; some of them will make you wish you could be their senior rater just once. But the bottom line is this: they are volunteering to stand up.

— What appears in the magazine is the best of what people send in, and we publish in about the same proportion of each type of article that we receive. If you have a complaint that there is too much of this, or not enough of that, get off your butt and write something. It is intellectually all too easy to snipe, but it takes a lot more in the guts department to be the one laying it out for the comments of others.

— The contents of the magazine are unofficial. Sure, the Chief of Armor pays the bill, but a long line of Chiefs have felt secure enough in the position to allow this forum to exist. You can say that the emperor’s clothes are threadbare, or even missing, and not commit career suicide. In that kind of environment, then, you will see pieces that are not always within our published doctrine, other pieces that seem fantastic, and ideas that totally tick you off. I say that this is the strength of our magazine, and it was one of the things that, as an ROTC cadet over twenty years ago, appealed to me. I thought it would be pretty darn cool to be affiliated with a part of the Army that thought and gave a public forum to what oftentimes amounts to dissent.

That said, if the magazine ever heads in a direction that you feel is suspect, say so. It is your publication, and truthfully, you have a large say in our direction. Pre-1973, when the United States Armor Association printed the magazine, the Association’s Executive Council oversaw the magazine’s ops. The current Chief of Armor, MG Harmer, like his predecessors, continues to follow General Starry’s lead in 1973 of promoting this professional discourse and encouraging debate as healthy for each one of us personally and professionally, for the branch specifically, and for our Army generally. It works for me. How about you?

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