

# General Orders

JOURNAL FOR LIVING HISTORIANS OF WORLD WAR TWO

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## FROM THE EDITOR

### What Is An Officer?

I'm always amazed at the level of effort living historians put into looking and acting like soldiers. It's not an easy task, and it means more than uniforms and gear—acting and thinking like a soldier takes a lot more thought and work. I see exceptions (reenactors who would not be mistaken for soldiers at 300 meters), but they are surprisingly rare. We make pretty good use of the information and examples we have.

Representing an officer is a different problem. An officer has to master the same basic skills as the soldiers he commands, but he has to do and be quite a lot more. The problem is that living historians have very few useful models. And officer stuff is sort of in-house—officers on entry get a large helping of it, but it's not generally something enlisted soldiers have much interest in understanding. This makes interpretation of a commissioned officer harder than most will understand. There is quite a bit of information about this in the “Officers Guide” course at ReenactorPro.org, but some things just need some practice and some context. So we will post frequent articles in General Orders on the details of how officers are supposed to look, act, and think.

Some background: I grew up in an officer's family and had two uncles who were officers as well in WWII. Later I was commissioned through ROTC from The Citadel. A few years after that I was a tactical officer in OCS (sort of an officer candidates' drill sergeant), and finally taught cadets at West Point for sixteen years. Shaping officers has been a big part of my life.

Why worry about this? Easy—the same reason we take time to make sure our uniforms and gear are authentic and squared away, the same reason we attend, sometimes obsessively, to the details of being enlisted soldiers. As I've often pointed out, we only do three things in this hobby: we *honor the veterans*, we *educate the public*, and we *have a good time*. To accomplish the first two tasks requires some work, and that includes the few who have a commissioned officer impression.

So let's get beyond the uniform. An empty suit is an empty suit, even if it's tailor made.

To kick off this thread, **here's the definition of a commissioned officer**: he has a *commission*. WTF? Okay, down to the basics. A commission is an official decree from the sovereign of your country that makes you an officer of the armed forces. Your authority derives from that commission, which is a legal document. It doesn't make you an automatic stud, it doesn't make you better than the soldiers you command. What it does is define your authority to give legal orders in the name of the Constitution, though the President and your civilian and military chain of command. That's the good part. The bad part: *you are strictly accountable for the legality and competence of those orders*. If your platoon is an ineffective, ragged zombie apocalypse, *it's your fault*. Legally your fault. You are *accountable* (and your company commander will also bite the bullet for not teaching and supervising you).

The noncommissioned officers under you have authority, but that authority is *indirect*—it derives from the orders of the officer commanding.

If your failures are frequent and due to ignorance, poor judgment, inattention to standing operating procedures, laziness, moral turpitude, or you're just a tough luck magnet (I generally don't think much of “luck”, but I've known some junior officers who just attracted disaster like flies on horse frocky), you're likely to stop being an officer or just reassigned to duties that reduce risk of damage.

So when you put on the suit for the first time, that pink and green ensemble with the costume jewelry pinned on just so—go ahead and look in the mirror and admire yourself, wallow in your new status. But get over it. Rank is not a status—it's a job. Such status as you have derives from how well you do that job.

Stepping away from the full-length mirror is step one. Tune in and we'll trace the other steps, one step at a time.

—Tim O'Neill

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*Note: General Orders is not supposed to be a private soapbox for the editors. If we deliver on our potential it will be because serious reenactors are willing to contribute. That's a slow process.*

*We accept articles written by reenactors and addressing (with eloquence and dignity—no trolling, complaining, or accusing) learning topics, suggestions for improvement, and other issues that interest our community.*

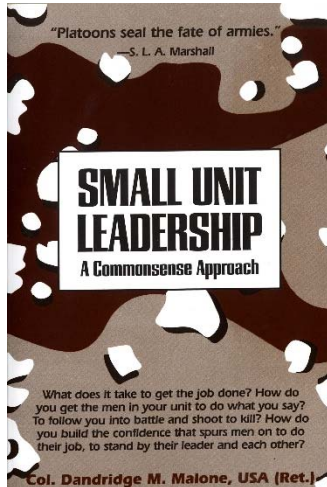
*We also accept letters to the editors. Again, professional discourse, not insults.*

## THE READING LIST

### What should be on the living historian's reading list?

In each issue of *General Orders* we will consider at least one book that will contribute to your impression, your performance, and your enjoyment of the hobby. Original references, including FM's and TM's and special texts are available in the resource library. But some works are longer, much richer, and must be read in the complete and original form.

Some will be nonfiction historical impressions (like Rick Atkinson's WWII trilogy); some will be useful for leaders. Some are reference works for impression.



#### **Small Unit Leadership – A Common Sense Approach** by Dandridge M. “Mike” Malone, Colonel, USA (Ret.)\*

A wartime FM on leadership principles doesn't exit, given that the U.S. Army before and during the war was unprepared doctrinally, not to mention materially, for most warfighting, and had more important things to do – namely, *winning the war* – than teaching leadership skills. There were so many barely-trained recruits and “90-day wonders” being churned out in such little time that there was *no time* for teaching these people finer niceties of combat, since this cannon fodder would likely become casualties even before they had opportunity to learn. If at all, leadership would be learned on the fly – so one hoped.

Postwar, circa 1946, a chapter on “leadership” was incorporated into the FM 22-5, which was renamed “Leadership, Courtesy and Drill” – but twenty-two pages of what leadership *looked like* during the war is no substitute for *teaching how leadership works*. The manual especially does not help us as reenactors, as it is so bare of technique that we essentially have to make up our leadership principles on the fly, or learn from experienced leaders with current or prior service, or get them from a source such as the online courses at ReenactorPro.

Fortunately, Mike Malone's book, *Small Unit Leadership – A Common Sense Approach*, developed from his experience of fighting two more wars since the Second, teaches exactly all those finer points that every soldier must know to *lead*, and *fight*, men in war.

He opens from the basic premise that for those on the sharp end of war – the captains, lieutenants, and particularly sergeants, as opposed to colonels and generals – the basic “mission” is *leading* soldiers in battle. Not managing – *leading*. Generals and colonels do the managing. The captains, lieutenants, and sergeants *fight*, and therefore *lead*. If they are not leading, they are *preparing* soldiers for fighting – that is, *training*. They are also treating their soldiers as *people*, meaning that they have lives, needs and wants, all of which must be addressed, so that they know their officers and NCOs also have their interests in mind. All of this is also important for us as reenactors. We will never (hopefully) fight a real war, but we can *train* others – our men in our reenacting units – *how* to fight according to Malone's principles, meaning we must *learn to lead*.

The elements of the “mission”, as Malone describes it, is accomplishing a *TASK*, for one, under realistic *CONDITIONS*, for another, which lastly is measured by a *STANDARD*. Malone teaches that *leadership* is preparing soldiers for battle with training, instilling confidence in them by their success,

and practicing (“drilling”) them until their success is automatic. As reenactors, we do essentially the same thing when we give ourselves the self-described “mission” of “honoring the veteran”. The *TASK* of this self-described mission, then, should be *learning*, and *teaching*, how the WW2 soldier lived and fought. Simply wearing the uniform will not be good enough. Realistic *CONDITIONS* help – whenever we get together as a group, squad-sized as a minimum and platoon-sized, if at all possible, we can practice the leadership techniques that Malone describes. The *STANDARD* is how close we come to what we understand the results should be, either from written historical accounts, period training manuals, and the observations *of the veterans we honor*.

But back to the original premise of *Small Unit Leadership* – Malone describes and lists the “Principles of Leadership”, as developed by the U.S. Army in 1948 and first published in 1951. There are eleven points, which I will not list here (read the book for that), but which Malone reiterates are of maximum importance, since they are the *STANDARD* by which Army leaders are evaluated. Unfortunately, like the 1946 FM 22-5, these circa 1948 “principles” do not really describe the *how* of leadership, just the *what*. Malone goes much farther in presenting his own sixteen points of leadership traits, that is, how it’s *done* – or more accurately, how it *gets done*, using the rest of the book to demonstrate those procedures. He describes developing soldiers by building their skills, and thus their will, through training and considered leadership; by using elements of small-unit teamwork to reinforce learned skills and confidence; by showing how to put “Skill, Will, and Teamwork” together effectively, and how success with skills motivates a soldier to do better for himself, and his team; and lastly presents a long list of twenty-seven “Leadership Skills” that are used to *develop leadership* in those who will *lead* soldiers, and in the soldiers themselves.

We as reenactors, unfortunately, don’t have weeks or months to practice and fuss over the principles and points in *Small Unit Leadership*. We have weekends at most, and usually one weekend a few times a year. But the book does have many valuable lessons about how to interact with, lead, and develop one’s followers, and instill competence, teamwork, and willpower in a reenacting unit. Ultimately, the book will be of utmost use to those in the leadership positions of lieutenants, platoon sergeants and squad NCOs, since they will be in the greatest contact with the “rank and file”, and who should have the most to impart. At the very least, Malone’s *Small Unit Leadership* should encourage those leaders to be “on top of their game” and know the subjects they teach “cold” so that they can impart *the best* of what they know to those who will one day become the new leaders who will take their places, and impart *their best* yet again.

Leaders never stop teaching. Or *learning*.

— Lynn Kessler

*\*Colonel. Dandridge M. “Mike” Malone, once a private, served as a Lt. Colonel and combat leader in Viet Nam, earned a B.S. degree from Vanderbilt University and an M.S. from Purdue, and also graduated from the Army's Command and General Staff College and the Army War College. Renowned as the Army's foremost expert on leadership, both in garrison and in combat, he has taught the subject to noncommissioned officers, West Point cadets, and students at various Army service schools. Retired as a Colonel in 1981 after serving 30 years, Mike passed away in 1995.*



## PUSHING THE TRAINING ENVELOPE

### The Combined Arms Team – Tank Destroyers

By Timothy O'Neill



The history of the tank destroyer in World War II is complicated by myths and confusion, and some background is necessary to understand what their role and performance were. Since the number of tank destroyers restored and available for living history events and field exercises has increased in recent years, the serious reenactor should have some idea what they were, why they were introduced, and how they were employed. In the fall/winter issue of *General Orders* we looked at the combined tank/infantry team; this time, we will investigate the tank destroyer's role.

In the run-up to war in the late 1930's the US Army was locked in stalemate concerning the use of armored assets. That debate has been covered in some detail (see *Armor for Reenactors* in the Reference Library). The more conservative infantry and cavalry elements of the Army who had a stake in the decisions were torn between the unwillingness to adopt the tank and the fear that the other branch would receive them instead. The doctrinal arguments were urgent—all the players knew war was coming—but only theoretical because the depression era defense budgets did not permit trying things out in a realistic way. Who could afford tanks?

The coming of a European war in 1939 finally secured the attention of Congress, and serious preparations began. The quick defeat of France in 1940 added momentum as observers and planners tried to identify the lessons of Germany's success. The French Army, which had begun modernization before Germany and was highly regarded on paper (and by conservative German planners), seemed to melt away before Guderian's tank formations. Many reasons for the failure became clear in the post-war analyses, but the causes were not so clear in 1941. What was clear was that defense against armored forces was a priority for the United States Army as it ramped up fitfully for its largest war.

The need was obvious. But how to answer that need was, as usual, a matter of long and time-wasting doctrinal debate between branches of service. Today we might call it a doctrine in search of a weapons platform.

**What is a tank destroyer?** The simple definitions turn out in retrospect to be anything but. We tend to think of a TD as a tracked gun motor carriage<sup>1</sup> armed with a dedicated direct-fire weapon designed to engage enemy armor. In fact, the tank destroyer was simply a specified weapon system with a primary mission of engaging and destroying enemy armor. This included towed antitank guns (which were more numerous than mounted ones—remember the infantry division's regimental antitank companies were

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<sup>1</sup> The expression "gun motor carriage" (GMC) is broad and a bit overused in the references. A GMC was basically what we call a "self-propelled gun": a direct-fire cannon of any size mounted on a chassis (that is, not towed—a GMC is its own prime mover). The term is not applied to a tank, which is in its own category; but a self-propelled TD is officially a GMC.

equipped with towed 57mm's by 1943-44; anything larger or faster had to be attached from GHQ reserves).

The squabble between branches was complicated. Infantry and Field Artillery both

staked a claim for TD proponency, but their reasons were different. The infantry wanted towed guns that could be dug in to support the defense and wanted direct control of them. The artillery was always doctrinally disposed to group critical resources together so they could be shifted with the tactical situation at the critical spot to achieve massed fire (instead of doling the guns out to cover everything at once). The other player turned out in practice to be the Coast Artillery, which then had charge of anti-aircraft defense. The standard large AA guns (particularly the 88mm and the 90mm) turned out to be the perfect size for anti-tank defense. This dawned on the Germans in 1938 during the Spanish Civil War when they began repurposing the 88 for ground targets.

The argument went on until mid-1941, when Marshall got tired of waiting for results and formed the TD forces into an informal branch (as he had, for the same reasons, set up the Armored Force).



The debate between conventional, towed and dug in guns and fast tank destroyers was solved in the time-honored American way: both were constructed in great numbers. And both evolved.

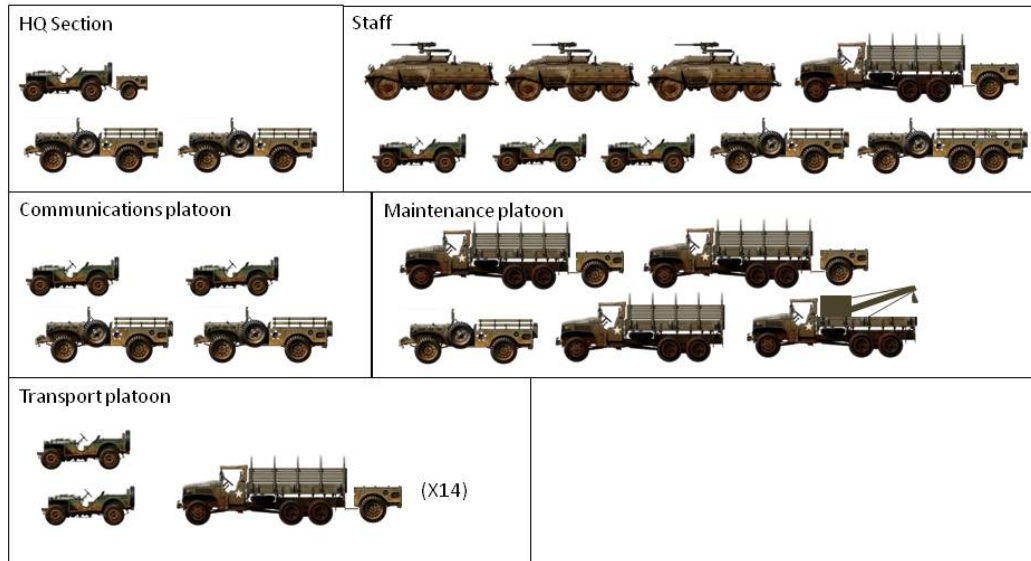
The first TD that we would recognize was simply a 37mm gun hastily attached to a jeep. We might speculate that the prototypes were secured with duct tape. This happened just before the European powers started getting serious about producing tanks with serious armor, against which the 37 could be

expected to leave a dusty spot before bouncing off. By the North Africa campaign, the TD had evolved into a half-track with an obsolete French 75 (standard in the US Army since 1918). It was mobile, it was bigger than the jeep-mounted 37, but the gun had the wrong ammunition and too low a muzzle velocity for serious anti-tank success.

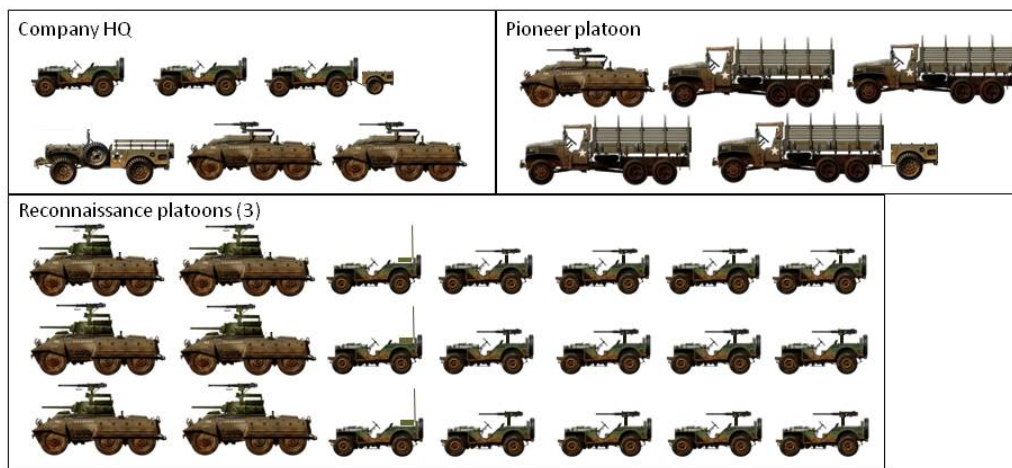
America's military history is replete with lessons learned from its own failures, and a reluctance to learn from those of other armies. But we did learn, and by late 1943 serious TD designs were rolling off the assembly lines. The M10 had its shortcomings—the main gun was marginally effective against heavy German armor, the open-top turret design left the crew vulnerable to shrapnel—but it could move as fast as a tank to be at the right place at the right time.



**Tactical organization:** These new TD's were not made organic to the infantry division, but were established as separate battalions, most of which were parceled out to the infantry divisions and shifted to critical battle fronts as needed. A tank destroyer battalion was a serious package. Let's take a look.

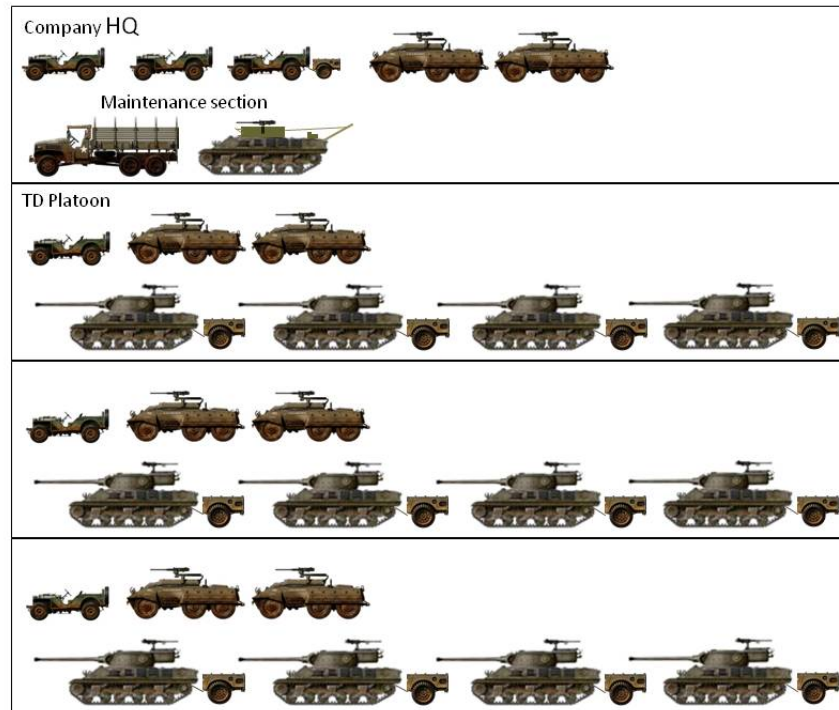


**Figure 3:** Headquarters and headquarters company, tank destroyer battalion. Like most larger Army units, there was a base organization that included the headquarters and the general support resources for the maneuver units. The headquarters section was the commander and the soldiers and gear (camo nets, water cans, map boards, and other gear) for the HQ itself. The staff was mobile, and since it had to visit the forward positions there were armored cars available. The comms platoon maintained the radios and related gear, put up the tall antennas that enemy aircraft love to strafe, and ran the message center. The battalion had an organic maintenance platoon (since it was a separate battalion, it couldn't depend on its parent organization), and since its maintenance requirements and basic load of spare parts weren't found in the infantry division maintenance, it had to keep itself running. Its transport platoon (two sections of seven 2½ ton 6x6 trucks with 1-ton trailers, carried general supplies and lots and lots of ammo).



**Figure 4:** TD battalion reconnaissance company. One of the most critical tasks in antitank defense is where to place your guns. This requires an understanding of terrain (cover and concealment, observation and fields of fire, and avenues of approach) and the enemy (where he is, where he is likely to attack, and

in what strength and equipment). The second is guesswork, and the best estimates of the higher-level G-2 will be folded into the field order. The terrain can be appreciated from maps, but it's usually better to go take a look for yourself before the TD's are positioned. This is the job of the recon company. The company HQ has the commander and his command group, with two M20's for mobility and limited protection. There is a pioneer platoon of combat engineers to cut trees, move rocks and rubble, and assure that the guns have good concealment and protection and a clear way to get into and out of positions. And there are three recon platoons with M8's and jeeps. Why so much recon? Because a single TD battalion should be able to provide support to an infantry division, which means reconnaissance is spread over an entire division front and reserve area.



**Figure 5:** Tank destroyer company. The company headquarters element has both administrative and tactical transport, as does each platoon. Note that in a tank company and platoon, the commander is assigned a tank, while the corresponding leaders in a TD unit are not. The reason is both practical and tactical. Doctrine dictates the TD is a defensive weapon, and hence will generally fight from a stationary, protected position, each TD having as needed primary, alternate, and supplementary positions.<sup>2</sup> Neither the company commander nor the platoon leaders want to be stuck in a stationary position when the unit has to shift positions. Another point to remember: the TD's are equipped with 1-ton trailers for ammo. This makes backing out of a firing position in rough terrain or woods tricky, and the leaders and crews (and the pioneer platoon) need to keep this in mind when selecting and improving a position. NOTE: The company's recovery vehicle also carries an 81mm mortar. This weapon is generally used to fire covering smoke rounds.

<sup>2</sup> A reminder: The primary position is where you set up before the enemy engages (we hope—it's harder after the shooting starts). You will generally prepare an alternate position to shift to once the enemy spots you. A supplementary position is prepared to cover that other route of attack the enemy might pick.

### Tactical employment of tank destroyers:

Use of TD's as doctrine of the time intended is covered in **FM 18-5** of the reference library. As of July 1944, "the primary mission of tank destroyer units is the destruction of hostile tanks by direct gunfire."<sup>3</sup>

There are several intended secondary missions (**FM 18-5** 6a(1)):

- (a) Direct or indirect fire to reinforce or supplement that of artillery units.
- (b) Destruction of pill boxes and permanent defensive works.
- (c) Support of landing operations.
- (d) Defense of beaches against waterborne attack. (The Coast Artillery made them promise.)
- (e) Roving gun and roving battery mission (more applicable to self-propelled units).

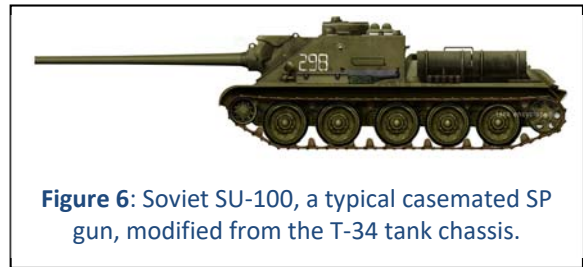
Several important ideas and realities are indicated in this statement. Remember, this is a 1944 manual, and reflects changes in prewar theory and doctrine based on experiences in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy.

*First*, the doctrine clung to the basic principle that tanks are to be destroyed by tank destroyers, not in unseemly shootouts with other tanks. Keep in mind the reasons for his idea:

1. Design technology of tanks in the 1930's and early in the war limited the size of the main gun the tank could carry.<sup>4</sup> (Remember, the gun has to recoil inside a cramped turret.) You could get a more powerful gun by using a TD. As the war progressed, the engineers solved this problem, but the TD lasted out the war.

2. A tank was thought to be wasted in the defense. Its mobile fire power and shock effect would not come into play. And sending tanks to protect the infantry would scatter them across the front instead of allowing them to be used in mass. This distinguishes the infantry divisions' organic AT resources (that is, the regimental AT companies—see the online Infantry Course, Lesson 6) from the reserve units. The regimental AT companies support their regiments and are part of the integrated defense plan, generally well dug in with primary, secondary, and alternate firing positions. The TD battalions are controlled by higher HQ and deployed as needed to provide mobile AT strength where it is needed.

From **FM 18-5**, sec 7b:



**Figure 6:** Soviet SU-100, a typical casemated SP gun, modified from the T-34 tank chassis.

<sup>3</sup> Quick note/reminder on "direct fire" vs. "indirect fire." Direct fire means you can see the target in your sight and can engage it with a flat-trajectory shot. Indirect fire allows you to place fire on some point you can't see (but a forward observer can see and adjust). A large direct-fire weapon is usually called a "gun." A large indirect fire weapon is a "howitzer." The 155mm Long Tom can swing both ways; it is designated a "gun/howitzer."

<sup>4</sup> We should note that the Germans and Russians tended to favor casemated AT guns, dispensing with the turret and placing the gun in an armored structure with limited traverse. Particularly on the German side, this allowed an economy of sorts—as tanks became obsolescent and were replaced by newer models, the old chassis were reused by replacing the superstructure with a casemate and installing a larger gun. They were cheaper, and as the war in the east became increasingly a defensive one the *Jagdpanzern* ("tank hunters") proliferated. The US experimented with casemated guns, but American industry was producing so many tanks already it wasn't worth it to mess with the momentum. The US philosophy was to overwhelm problems if solving them would take too long.

b. Infantry and other arms are equipped with organic antitank guns for their own protection against small scale armored attacks. These guns, reinforced if necessary by tank destroyers, delay the hostile tank attacks and cover the employment of *massed* tank destroyers. As the armored attack develops, more and more *massed* destroyers are placed in action progressively.

This system of employment depends heavily on intelligence. An essential element of intelligence in defensive operations is the strength, locations, and intentions of the enemy. If the G-2 can determine where the enemy's tanks are going to attack, they can be massed and moved to the critical spot.

This is the major difference between self-propelled and towed TD's. The M-10, M-18, and M-36 GMC units can move quickly across the battle area and, unlike the towed battalions, arrive at the firing position ready to shoot. The towed guns have to be unlimbered, shoved into position, and dug in.

There is a rhythm to this doctrine. Looking again at FM 18-5 (8b):

b. Fundamental principles. Tank destroyer action consists of *repeated application* of the following fundamentals:

(1) Seeking information of hostile tanks by vigorous and sustained reconnaissance.

(2) Movement to firing positions so as to intercept hostile tanks by arriving sufficiently in advance of the tanks to permit proper emplacement and concealment of tank destroyers. *Tank destroyers ambush hostile tanks, but do not charge nor chase them.*

(3) When tanks advance, tank destroyers hold their ground, since destruction can be accomplished best at close range.

(4) When tanks withdraw, tank destroyers occupy forward positions from which to pursue by fire.

Some points to remember about doctrine:

1. TD's from the reserve are generally committed as battalions; breaking them up into companies can result in a weak, fragmented response.

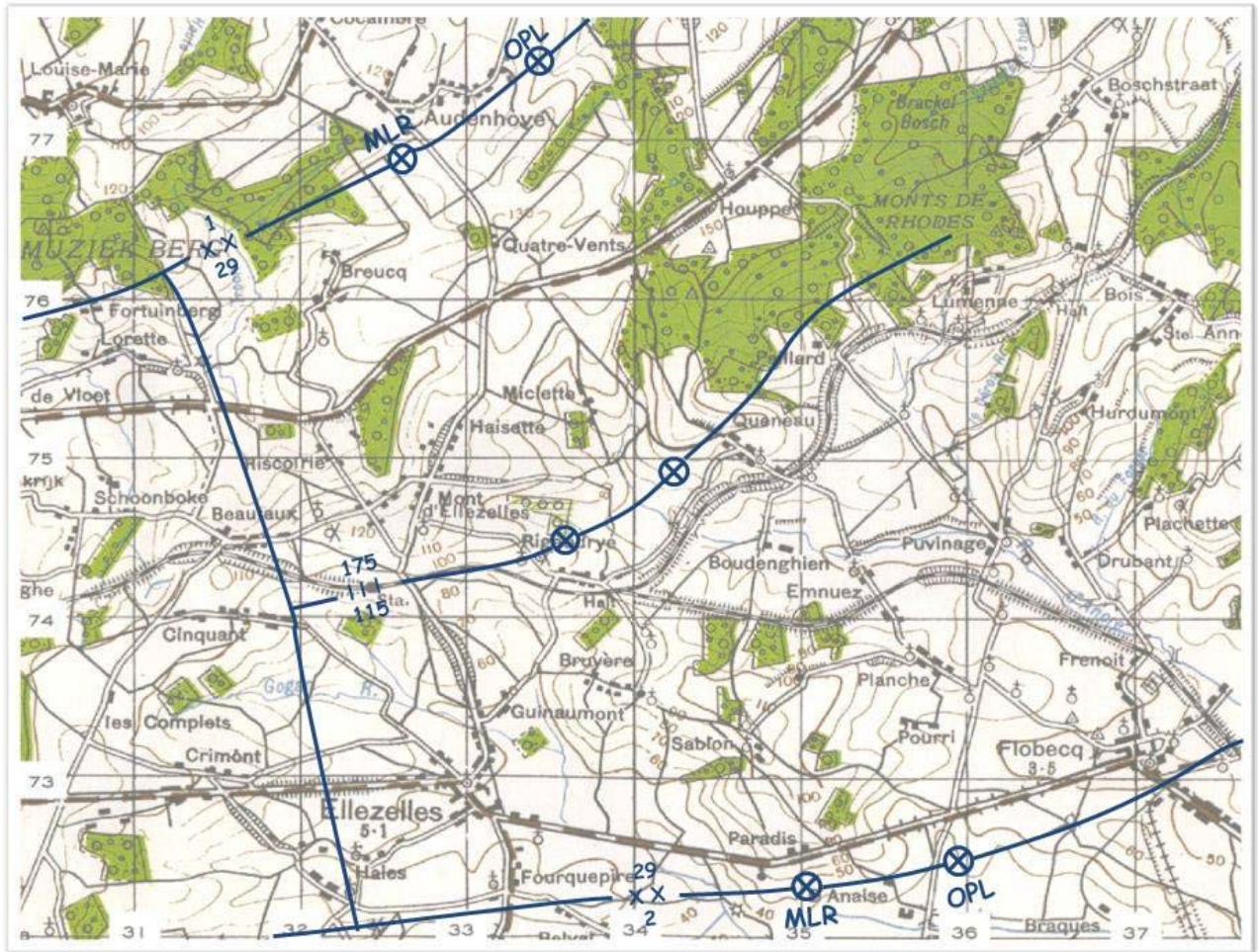
2. That said, you do what you gotta do, doctrine or not. The enemy gets a vote. Doctrine gives you strong guidelines, but if you're the commander and it's your decision, use your head. And remember if you deviate from doctrine and win, you're a hero. If you fail, expect to pay a price. Life is not fair.

#### **An example:**

Let's examine a typical scenario for use of tank destroyers (in this case, mobile ones).

The 29th Infantry Division, US V Corps, is pausing for a few days in the fall 1944 exploitation and pursuit of German forces following COBRA. The 29th is occupying a defensive position in the vicinity of ELLEZELLES near the French-Belgian border. The 175th and 115th RCTs are on line, the 116th in reserve.

Here is a general description of the placement of friendly troops. If you have not enjoyed the map reading and operations courses yet, this is a chance to go back and learn these skills. If you have finished that part of the continuing education, here's a quick review.



**Figure 7:** 29th Infantry Division defends vic ELLEZELLES, late October 1944. To the north of the 29th's sector is the 1st Infantry Division; to the south, the 2nd ID.

The blue lines and markings comprise the *overlay*, information that is usually drawn on a sheet of tracing paper to place over an issued topographic map. The blue lines represent boundaries. The 29th is facing east (that is, to the right), where we presume the enemy lurks. The numbers and symbols (||| = regiment, X X = division) show the lateral boundaries; within those boundaries the indicated unit has responsibility to defend. The centerline marks (⊗) are *coordination points* at which adjacent units must . . . coordinate. The front line is designated by MLR (main line of resistance); draw an imaginary line between the two MLR coordination points and this would indicate roughly the front line. The OPL indicates the outpost line, the farthest distance from the MLR that will be manned by security elements of the division. (Farther to the front we would probably find a screen provided by a cavalry group attached to corps, but we'll worry about that some other time.

The area within the 29th division boundaries from the MLR to the OPL is called the *security zone*. From the front line to the vertical blue line to its rear is the *combat zone*. Behind that is the *reserve zone*, and to the rear of that is the *communications zone* (COMZ).

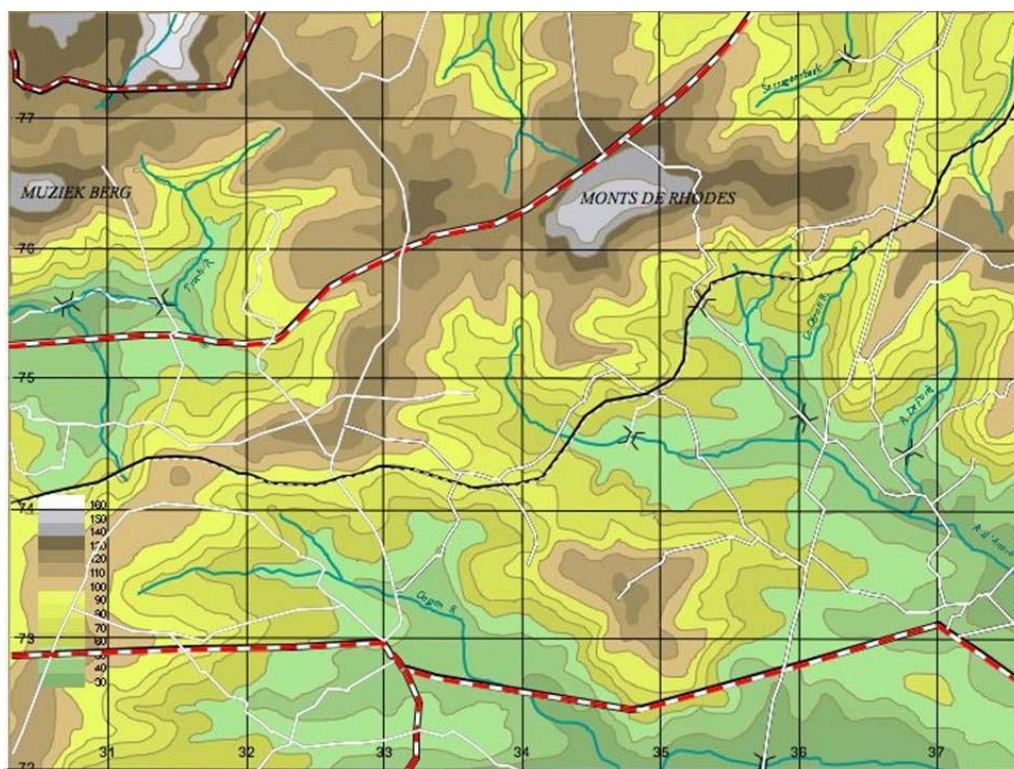
Placement of TD resources (and just about everything else) is influenced by *terrain*. We will be considering the “holy trinity” of terrain factors: (1) *cover and concealment*; (2) *observation and fields of fire*; and (3) *avenues of approach*.

*Cover and concealment*: can the enemy see you? can he hit you with aimed fire? Hiding behind a bush, reenactor style, might hide you, but it won’t provide cover.

*Observation and fields of fire*: Can you see the enemy? Can you get a clear shot at him?

*Avenues of approach*: If the enemy will attack, how will he come at us? TD’s will be looking for the likely armored *Schwerpunkt* (the main attack). Those are the routes you will have to cover with AT fire.

Let’s look at the terrain:

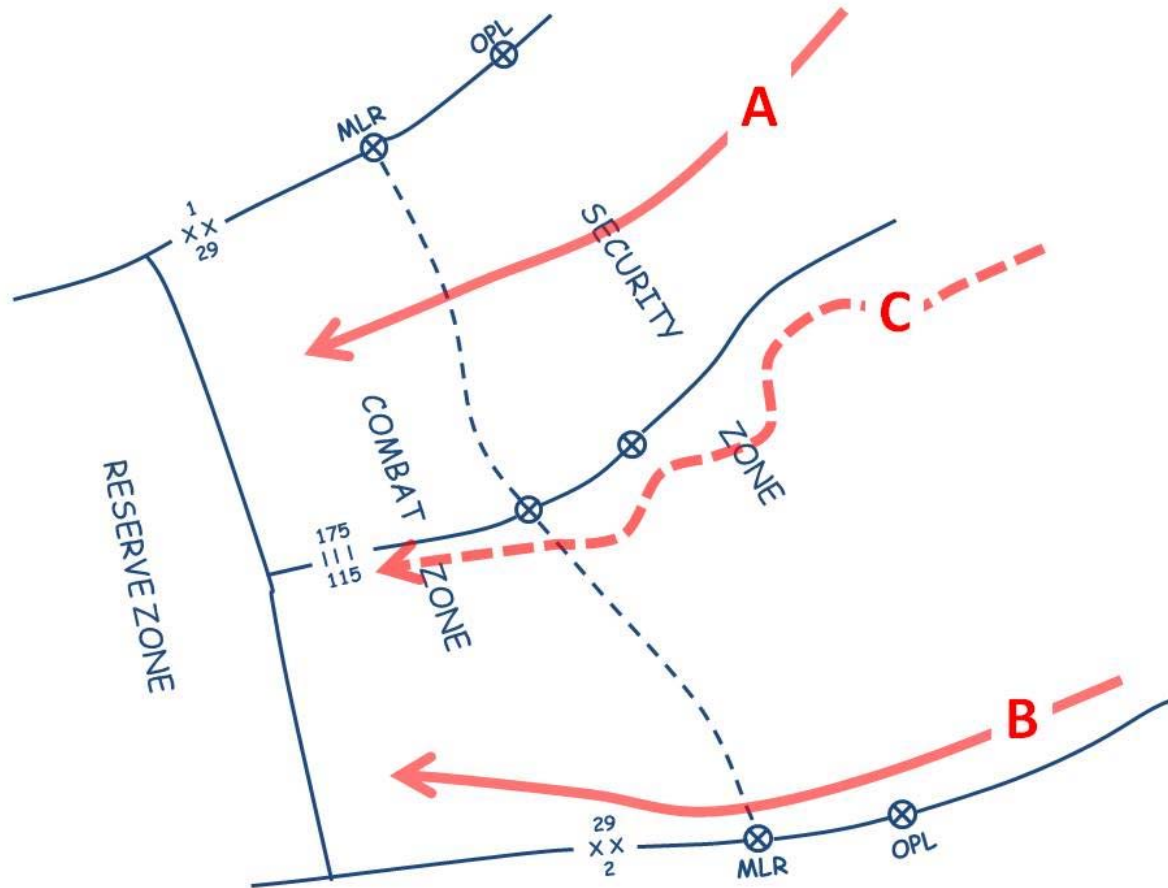


**Figure 8:** Here is an elevation-tinted rendering of the topography in the map area. Several river valleys converge here, with a high mass in the north center dominated by the *Montes de Rhodes*. The 29th’s line regiments are deployed on the higher ground from lower center to upper left, interdicting two main hard-surface roads. A network of secondary roads is available for movement but is less trafficable.

The enemy is known to have at least one Panzer battle group in the area; division G-2 expects a counterattack.

A look at the actual map shows the likeliest armor routes for an enemy attack: the hard-surface roads to the north and south of the 29th sector. There is also a combination of smaller roads running through the center, but the main route moves through several long road cuts. The G-2 has designated these axes A, B, and C. A and B are considered equally likely. A could put a wedge between the 29th and the 1st Infantry Division to the north; an attack on the southern flank avenue (B) threatens the major road junction at ELLEZELLES. The center (C) could split the 115th and 175th at their boundary.





**Figure 9:** Three possible enemy avenues of attack.

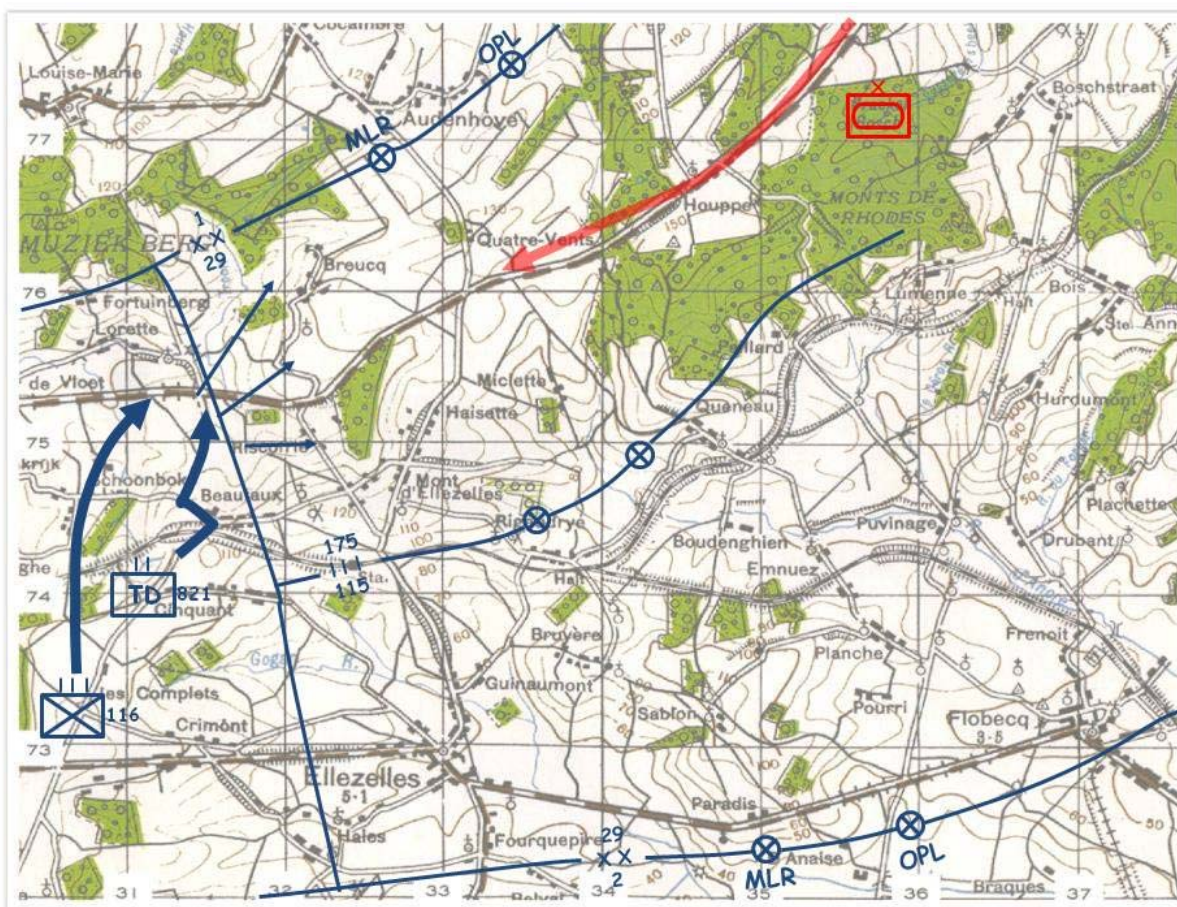
Division G-2 concludes that axis C is unlikely. Yes, the road cuts provide cover and concealment; but GS and DS artillery support could smack them hard while they are in a narrow defile, and particularly as they emerge close to our MLR one tank at a time; destroy the lead tank and the ones behind can't maneuver around and have no alternative but to sit under mortar and 105/175 fire and curse in German. And a few P-47's could raise unmitigated hell against a column that can't maneuver.

A and B, however, are likely. But the Germans don't like to spread the wealth over multiple axes: they go by the von Manstein principle: *klotzen, nicht kleckern* ("clobber them, don't spatter them"). If both axes are equally likely, we will have to be able to respond to either.

Now, here's the special issue of tank destroyer employment. The organic AT guns of the 29th (57's of the regimental AT companies) are deployed in fixed positions already guarding the front, along with every bazooka, sticky bomb, mine, and the p38 can opener in the hands of the troops. Impressive (except for the weakness of the 57 against heavy armor), but inflexible. We need to be able to respond against the main attack, and we won't know which axis that will employ until we see trees start falling over and hear straining engines and the clacking of tracks.

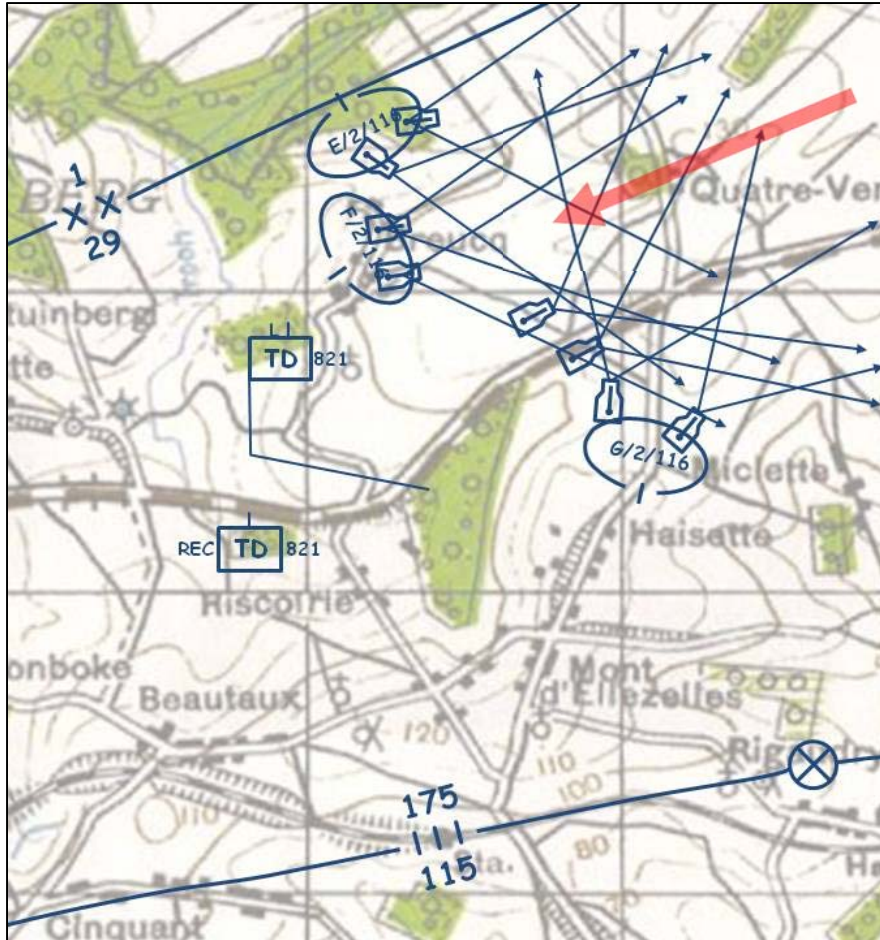
**The answer:** V Corps just happened to decide to loan out the 821st TD battalion to the 29th. This very strong resource is hoarded out of sight in the reserve zone (not shown in the map). Since we are reasonably sure the enemy will use A or B, the three recon platoons in the 821st's HQ Company move

forward with jeeps and M8's to scout out firing positions and routes that will allow the TD companies and platoons to dash to the rescue when the *Schwerpunkt* has announced itself. The pioneer platoon in HQ Company can clear obstacles on critical roads and help set up the primary, alternate, and supplemental firing positions (usually before the enemy's decision is obvious—basic work can help the companies get into the flight faster).



**Figure 10:** Enemy *Panzerkampfgruppe* attacks on the northern axis (A). The force is sufficient to penetrate the 175th MLR, so this is a job for the division reserve, reinforced by the 821st TD battalion. The enemy is obliged by the terrain to cross a north-south valley; 175th defends the high ground to the west. The 821st recon has already scouted the area and has selected positions; the pioneer platoon is busily improving the emplacements as the TD companies move forward by road to establish a blocking force. At the same time, the division commander decides to commit elements of the regiment in reserve (116th RCT) as well, since it's a bad idea to set up a defense by AT weapons without infantry support. Let's assume the second battalion (2/116) is detached for this; yeah, this is evidently the *Schwerpunkt*, but there is no certainty the enemy will not launch a supporting attack elsewhere. The decision to commit the reserve is critical for a unit on the defense.

This puts the enemy in a bad situation. He may well overrun the MLR in the 175th RCT sector, but he will be under fire from organic AT weapons as well as DS and GS artillery, and will also be in range of the 821st's 76mm's (I used the M18 in the illustration at Figure 5; might as well decide the 821st is equipped with them) for much of their exposed approach march across the valley. (They may be masked by the 821st guns as they draw nearer, but as soon as they hit the high ground they will face point-blank fire from 36 tank destroyers with the capability to do serious damage.



**Figure 11:** Here is an enlargement of the critical blocking position BREUCQ-QUATRE-VENTS. Companies E, F, and G have occupied positions north, south, and east of the axis of the enemy main attack. Two companies of TD's have been placed (each symbol represents a pair of vehicles) to bring advancing armor into a crossfire—called a “killing zone” in the trade); fields of fire are shown. The dismounted elements of 2/116 RCT secure the TD's from enemy infantry.

The remaining TD company is in reserve to the west (not shown). The recon company of 821st is held in the rear at the commander's discretion; if the battalion is forced to withdraw (unlikely at these odds), recon can provide a rear-guard; the recon company is equipped with M8 armored cars, which have a little added firepower.

**The bottom line:** Since the typical placement of a TD, towed or self-propelled, in the hobby is usually “on the road, pointed into the woods”—exactly the wrong way to use a TD—all this may seem remote and overcomplicated. But it isn't. As usual, it's the task that's complicated, not the tactics. We reduce use of TD's to the simplest level: *place them in covered and concealed positions, pointed at the threat*. We use TD's when the threat is armored vehicles, not infantry. So decide based on map and ground reconnaissance where the threat is likely to come from and place your TD's where they can most effectively find observation, fields of fire, cover and concealment.

## PUSHING THE TRAINING ENVELOPE

### Mysteries of the Grinder: Common Reenactor Mistakes

Okay, listen up. I learned close order drill almost sixty years ago and have been doing it ever since. For me, it's like "muscle memory." I just do it automatically, without thought or consideration. This is what reenactors must aim for: that Zen-like state of unconscious response that lets us execute commands without hesitation and all in the same way.

**"War is very simple, but in War the simplest things become very difficult."**

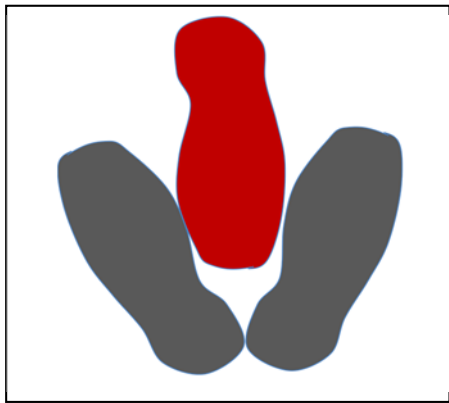
**—Karl von Clausewitz**

Reenactors often fall short because they don't practice, and when they do they learn bad habits. The last problem is the most serious: once we learn to do something the wrong way, getting it right is twice as hard as learning it the right way, first time.

Here are some things that are common in our community and easy to fix.

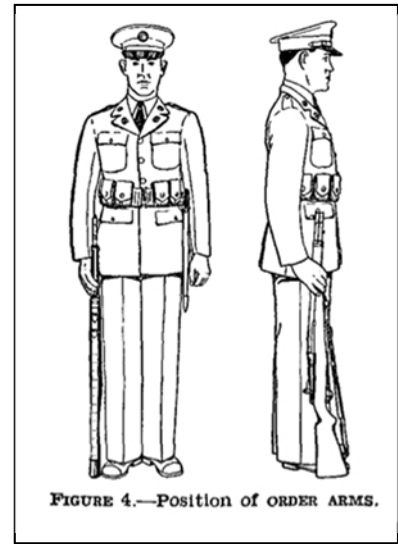
#### 1. **Standing at attention.** Yeah—the real basics. How to stand. (We'll learn to walk later.)

First, get your feet right. I've seen reenactors standing with their feet together and parallel. It's hard to stand steady that way, because it's unnatural. Your feet should be at a 45° angle. What does that look like? The heels are together, toes apart. How far apart? Easy—the drill sergeant will show you by pushing his boot between your toes. If they are at a 45° angle, they will be just touching the rides of his boot. It's really the most natural way to stand.



Many of us did hard time in the Civil War hobby. In that world, the soldier is taught to let his arms hang naturally, with the little finger along the trouser seam. In WW II (as now) we hold the thumb along the trouser seam, fingers curled naturally, the thumb touching a point between the index and middle fingers. It's easy and stress free. Head and eyes should be to the front, shoulders not in an exaggerated position. Knees should be flexed, not locked. All this was a bit more challenging when we mobilized a huge army after a deep economic depression that produced a lot of bone and joint problems.

**2. Standing at attention (order arms) when under arms.** This is something I've seen a lot. There is a tendency to rest the rifle on the ground with the butt plate resting evenly on the surface. This puts the muzzle of the rifle point away from the center line, like a sort of lazy parade rest. The correct position is with the thumb, again, along the trouser seam, and the toe of the butt even with the toe of the right foot.



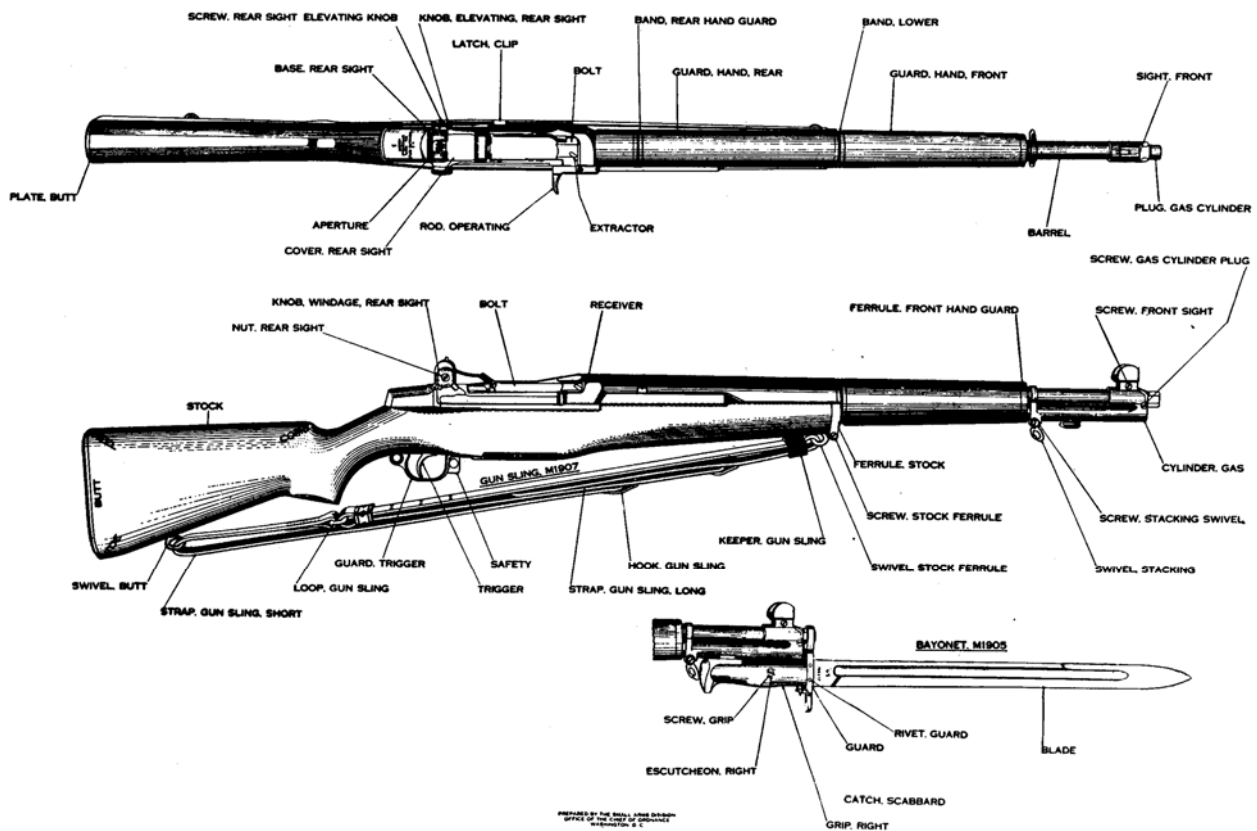
This means the rifle will rest on the point of the heel of the butt plate, the muzzle aimed more or less at your arm pit.

**3. Falling in under arms.** Unless ordered, every soldier falling in while carrying his rifle will be at order arms (2, above). If the soldier is carrying a BAR or a carbine, he falls in at *sling arms*. NOTE: We *don't* do rifle manual of arms with the BAR or the carbine.

**4. Executing inspection arms with the M1.** I frequently see reenactors open the bolt at inspection arms by placing the fingers of the right hand, extended and joined, on the outside of the rifle, engaging the operating rod handle with the heel of the hand, and pushing it open. This is how we did it with the M14, a product improved M1 issued from the late Fifties until replaced by the M16.

To open the bolt of the *M1* (which has a stiffer operating spring), hold the rifle steady at port arms with the right hand around the small of the stock. Make a fist with the left hand, thumb extended, and use that thumb to push the bolt open until it locks. Then quickly look down to verify the chamber is clear, grasp the rifle at the balance with the left hand and return head and eyes to the front. (The small of the stock is the slender wooden grip area just to the rear of the receiver and the trigger guard, where your right hand holds the rifle at port arms.)

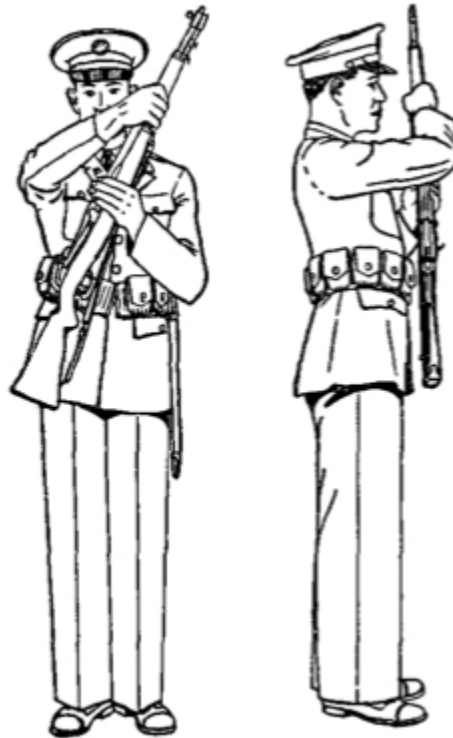
So nobody gets confused, here is an exhaustively labeled illustration.



**5. Grasping the upper hand guard.** When moving the rifle from port arms (including the middle move from left or right shoulder) to order arms, we must grab the upper hand guard.

Reenactors either get sloppy with this or make it too elaborate. Either way, it looks silly. But it's really simple (as usual).

Let's use the example of the soldier who is at port arms and wants to (or is ordered to, "wants" being an elusive idea in Army World) move the rifle to order arms. The first move is to shift the right hand, which at port arms is holding the rifle by the small of the stock, to the upper hand guard (see below). Note that the upper hand guard is there to keep overexcited soldiers from grabbing a hot exposed barrel by mistake. The upper hand guard is not there on the M14 (due to the requirements of an air-cooled barrel on a rapid-fire weapon), but it's on the M1.



The common mistake is to lower the rifle by dropping the left hand, which is holding the balance, and grasping the upper hand guard when it slides down. Wrong. Keep the rifle at the port arms position (don't drop the left) and reach up to place the right hand on the guard. Then move the rifle down, holding it by the upper hand guard and steadied with the left hand as you guide it into place as described in point 2.

Remember also that the exaggerated angle of the right arm seen in *Full Metal Jacket* and elsewhere (holding the right forearm parallel to the ground when grasping the front hand guard) is *not* correct. Use the drawing above as your guide.

**6. Dress at close interval.** The reasons for this one are less obvious. When reenactors fall in, they tend to do so clumsily, but most do know how to do it right. The problem is, we don't "fall in" enough for it to become a practiced move.

One problem that can be disposed of easily is "close interval." At normal interval, we fall in at an arm's length. At close interval, the left hand is placed on the hip and the elbow forward, parallel to the front; soldiers align themselves with the tip of the elbow just touching the right arm of the next soldier.

This can be helpful if there is limited space to fall in, and it is required at parades and reviews when using "company mass" formation (which we never do). But it has a disadvantage. If we form up at close interval and then face right or left to march somewhere, our interval is unworkable—each soldier is too close to the man in front (which should be an arm length to allow marching without being crowded). Think about it: from close interval, RIGHT FACE! FORWARD MARCH! The formation will have to stumble for a while as people move to a normal interval front to rear.

Unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise, always fall in at normal interval.

**7. Lining up.** So, we're marching to the chow hall in a column of threes, by platoon. We get near the door and halt. What do we do now?

**Option 1:** "When I say FALL OUT, everybody head for the door. We're only feeding the first fifty people, so don't be shy!"

What could go wrong?

**Option 2:** "Column of files to the LEFT. First squad, forward. . ."

"Second squad (spoken by the second squad leader), STAND FAST!"

"Third squad (spoken by the third squad leader), STAND FAST!"

"MARCH!"

So the first squad moves forward to the mess hall door, the second and third. wait patiently. When the time is right, the squad leader commands "Second squad! Forward. MARCH!" Then when there is space, the third squad follows.

So the first squad isn't always first to eat, the platoon leader can say "Column of files from the CENTER! Second squad, forward. . ." or "Column of files from the RIGHT! Third squad, forward. . ." order is always in the same direction: 123, 231, 312.

Some of this seems fussy and overcomplicated. Wrong: all these things are done for a reason, but the reasons are never quite obvious until you do it the wrong way. Endlessly studying FM 22-5 won't solve everything. There are things you learn on the grinder that aren't in print because it's so much easier to learn by doing.

FALL IN!

— *Sgt. Drilldich*

## SPECIAL SECTION: AAR REPORTS

### 2019 Hazelton PA Event AAR

*Or, The Dreaded “TX” (um . . . that is, “Tactical”)*



Photo by Dan McMichael

*Special note: In this issue we depart from our usual instructional articles to present an “after-action” report of a recent field event. AARs in one case describe the blow-by-blow actions of the day, such as those typically provided by reenactors; others, such as those from the National Training Center, are too technical in tactics and operations to be of much use to reenactors. This AAR hopefully strikes a balance, being not too technical, yet just technical enough to be useful. Also, the author has tried his upmost to be fair, impartial and professional in the content and presentation. Hopefully he will have succeeded.*

\* \* \*

*One day one of their number would write a book about all this, but none of them would believe it, because none of them would remember it that way.*

— James Jones, *The Thin Red Line*

The Hazelton April 27, 2019 tactical event, hosted by the organizers of the old Gap II, was an excellent start to the reenacting season. It brought out old friends, guns, ammo, tanks, tents, scotch, cigars – what could be better? Well, the weather for one. Way wet on Friday night, which inhibited the movement of tracked and especially wheeled vehicles off-road on Saturday. Allied Command on the northern side, where I was serving with the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry, was excellent. Comms were consistent, short, succinct, to the point, and in WWII military jargon for the most part. Officers’ chain of command and duties were clear. Units were not micromanaged by their commanders, and dispositions were left to the senior NCOs and squad leaders. Individual soldier placement in battle areas (there were several “phase lines”) was mostly good, in spite of lack of cover, although no one “dug in”, per se, since there wasn’t time . . . or energy . . . or orders . . . we’re reenactors after all . . . but that’s ok. It looked soldierly. Everyone performed well, took their hits, fell back when necessary . . . and did it all over again. And again. And again. Many times.

And therein lies the problem of this particular “TX” – the “training exercise”, which is really what we should call our “tacticals” since there is no such concept in Army lexicon or application, WWII to modern-day. As with the Army, we reenactors hopefully start out with a plan, run it, see results, make note of what works and what doesn’t, get opinions, and work on improving the next event. Think Dry Prong, Louisiana, summer 1941.

Oh, and in the meantime, burn a lot of powder – hopefully, with a purpose.



That happened here, but there were some issues, both on the northern flank, which I shall address momentarily, and the southern, which I will address in time. But also remember that this AAR is told from the viewpoint of *one* attendee of the event, serving essentially as an ad-hoc “umpire” (again, think Dry Prong, Louisiana, summer 1941), collaborating with those in command, or at least those willing to communicate. But *unlike* Dry Prong, I was the *only* “umpire”. TX’s are designed to have way more eyes (“umpires”) on the field, and therefore more evaluations of what happened, what went right and wrong, and why. Ideally, AARs anywhere in the future will have more eyes out, but that will depend on having more people willing to write them or cooperate with the authors, and not just post their opinions on Facebook. This AAR is more than just a blow-by-blow account of what happened, but remember, it is the viewpoint of one umpire, and will reflect only my best interpretation of the information I have at the time.

At the very least, more umpires are necessary.

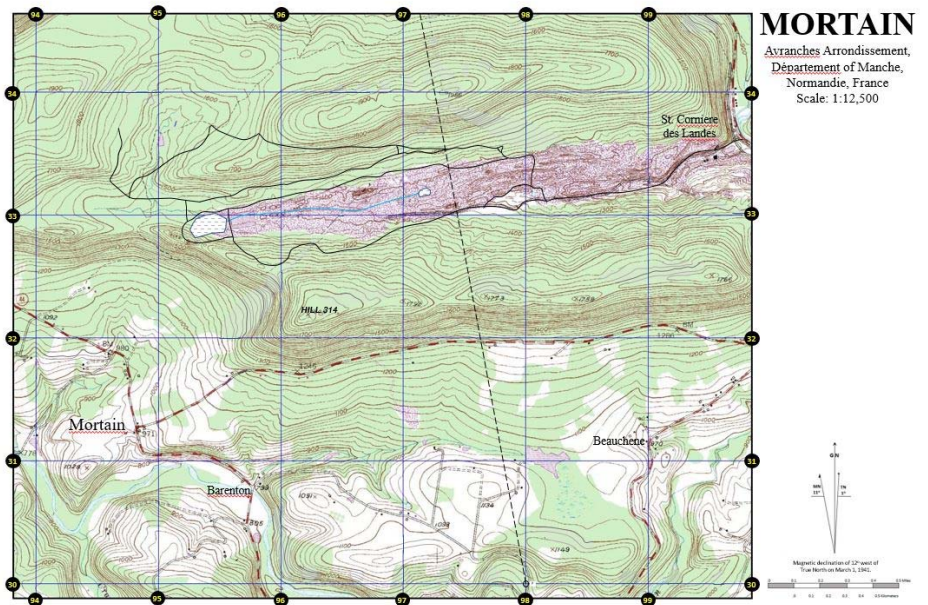
### ***The Set-Up Overall***

This is the *overall plan* or “operations order” (the modern “OPORD”) – the *objective*, the strategy, of the Allied forces. The event was designed to recreate the German attack on Mortain in the summer of 1944. The Germans would attack in force from the east to push the Allies back to the west. Our Allied objective was to stop them. Sort of.

Because actually, the Allies were meant to “sort of” stop them via a plan change (“FRAGO”) as of Saturday morning, when by start time many attendees had bailed out (my own unit lost 6 men, 2 if not 3 .30-cals, a 60mm mortar, and all of our vehicular mobility). Other units experienced the same. The Allied field therefore was cut by about 1/3 and we on the northern flank had to borrow troop transport. But, as the tactics were thus designed on the northern flank, there was no way to push back on the Germans. Or stop them, even. We got cut up and died gracefully. And it didn’t need to be that way.

### ***Part 1: Northern Flank, Version 1.0***

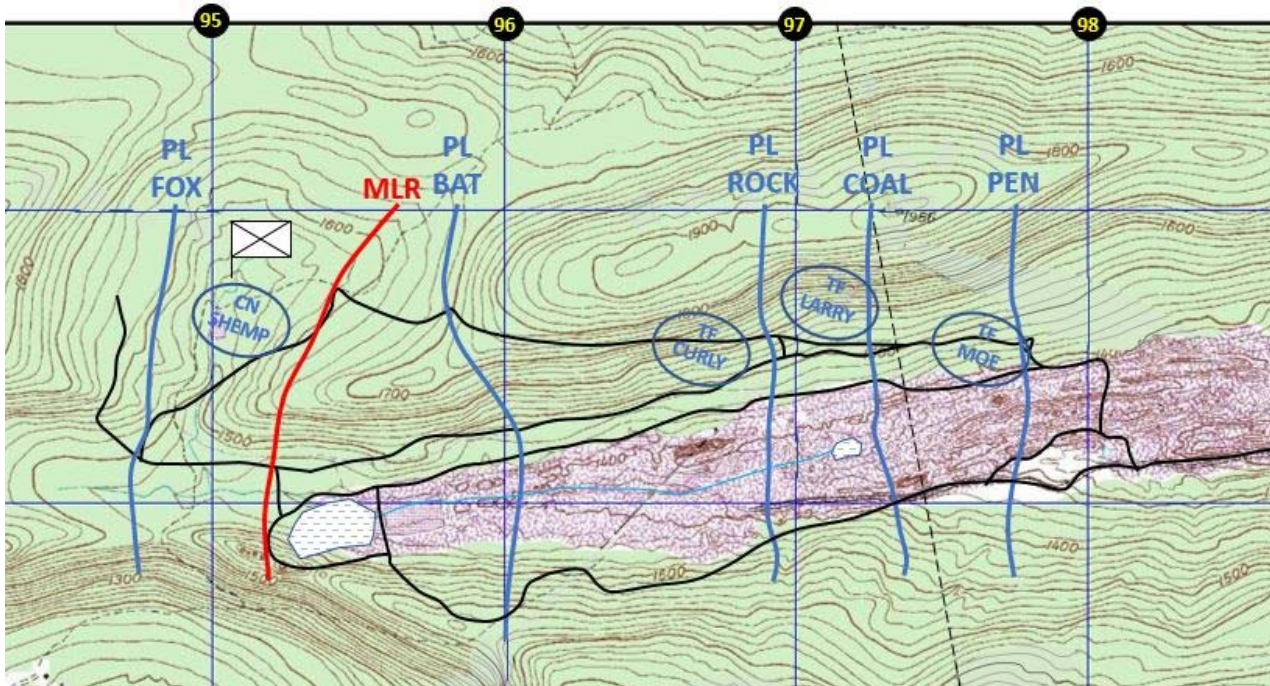
For this AAR, I’m using the map I created, since the map that Allied command issued was a densely black Google Earth image download, with unreadable terrain features, that I’ll show later when discussing the southern flank. Its best use was identifying grids for air/artillery strikes, and also the road network. Otherwise, its terrain features were unreadable. My finished map measured 12” x 18”, consisting of a download from a USGS topo map service. Here is the result:



Also, before I move on, one important point – I’m harping on the use of maps, and the ability to read maps, because it’s a *basic soldier skill* that was taught in *basic* training; it’s even in FM 21-100 The Soldier’s Handbook, Chapter 12, Use of Compasses and Maps, so look it up; if it’s there, everyone must have been meant to know how to read a map, and use a compass.

It’s *basic*.

Here’s how things looked, on a snip from my map, at the start of the day, with phase lines and initial dispositions included, simplified:



The contested area is purple, an old coal mine location, long defunct. North is UP. The thin blue lines are standard Universal Transverse Mercator lines, the actual scale 1:12,500. A grid is less than one-half mile square. Thicker blue lines and one red are Phase Lines. Note that there are three “TF”s – Task Forces Moe, Larry and Curly, right to left, with overall command net “CN” or “Shemp” on the far left.

(Note: TF Curly is shown set up here, on the northern flank, only for explanation purposes. It’s true Area of Operations [“AO”] throughout most of the day was on the open-terrain southern flank, since TF Curly contained the preponderance of the Allied armor and vehicles, and was assigned to counter any German armor movements, which naturally chose that same ground for obvious reasons.)

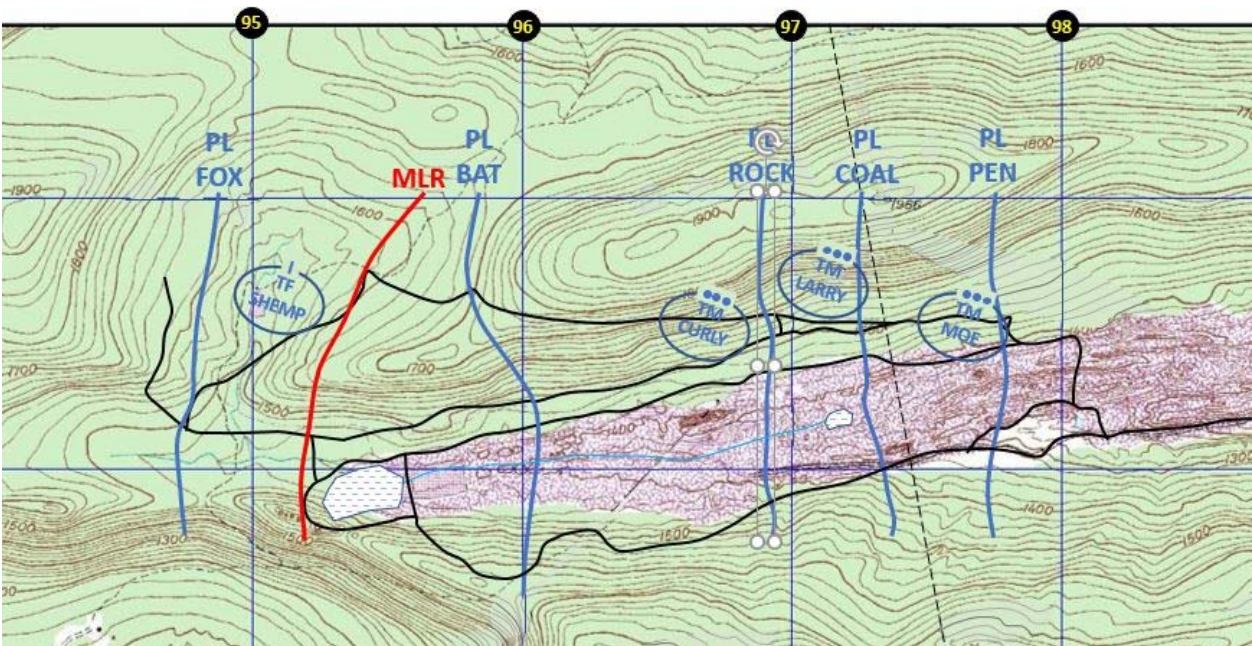
But “Task Forces” – wait, what??? Yeah, in North Africa, we had Task Forces initially in the Western Desert in the hills around Kasserine, until we found that because our forces were distributed into penny packets, we got whopped and had to learn better tactics (generally, you always learn more from mistakes than successes). The Navy had task forces in assaulting islands in the Pacific, but there were no ships here, or Marines. And historically, in WW2, when armored divisions were broken down into Regimental Combat Teams (a cross-attached company of tanks reinforcing a battalion of infantry, with a battery of mobile artillery, for example, “CCA”, “CCB” and so on were created) and assigned a *mission*,

or “task”, they might gain a temporary name, like “Team ----” after the assigned commander’s last name (as in “Team Cherry” of Bastogne fame). But why call these Hazleton units “Task Forces”?

Near as I can tell, because it gave structure to command, organized existing numbers into manageable units, and just sounded cool. Which worked at least for the command purposes. As I said before, command communications on the northern flank worked well. But TFs are really for far larger numbers – *thousands* – plus they usually involve ships and lots of water, or Regimental Combat Teams as above, but they don’t address *tactics*, especially those involving *vastly smaller* numbers, when our numbers *as organized* on Saturday constituted *PLATOONS*. It skews your thinking a little, and it’s supposed to, but it’s better to think in terms of numbers which *actually work, tactically*.

Units, operating in the field, are all about numbers, of course. *Far smaller numbers*. Battalions, companies, platoons. And here, on the northern flank, remember the Allies had a personnel problem since we lost numbers. We have to think along the lines of what the numbers that we have can do effectively, to operate effectively – in other words, as *PLATOONS*.

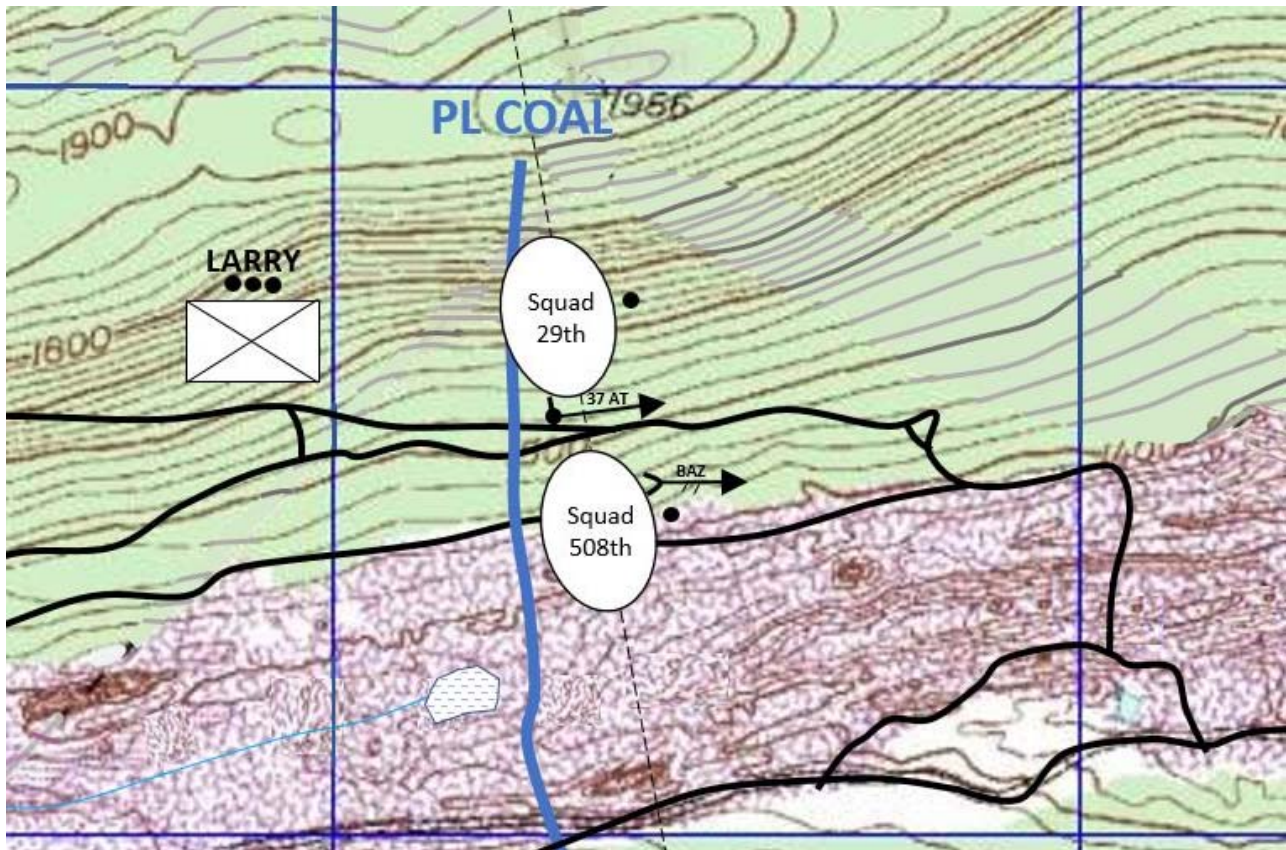
### *Northern Flank, Version 1.1*



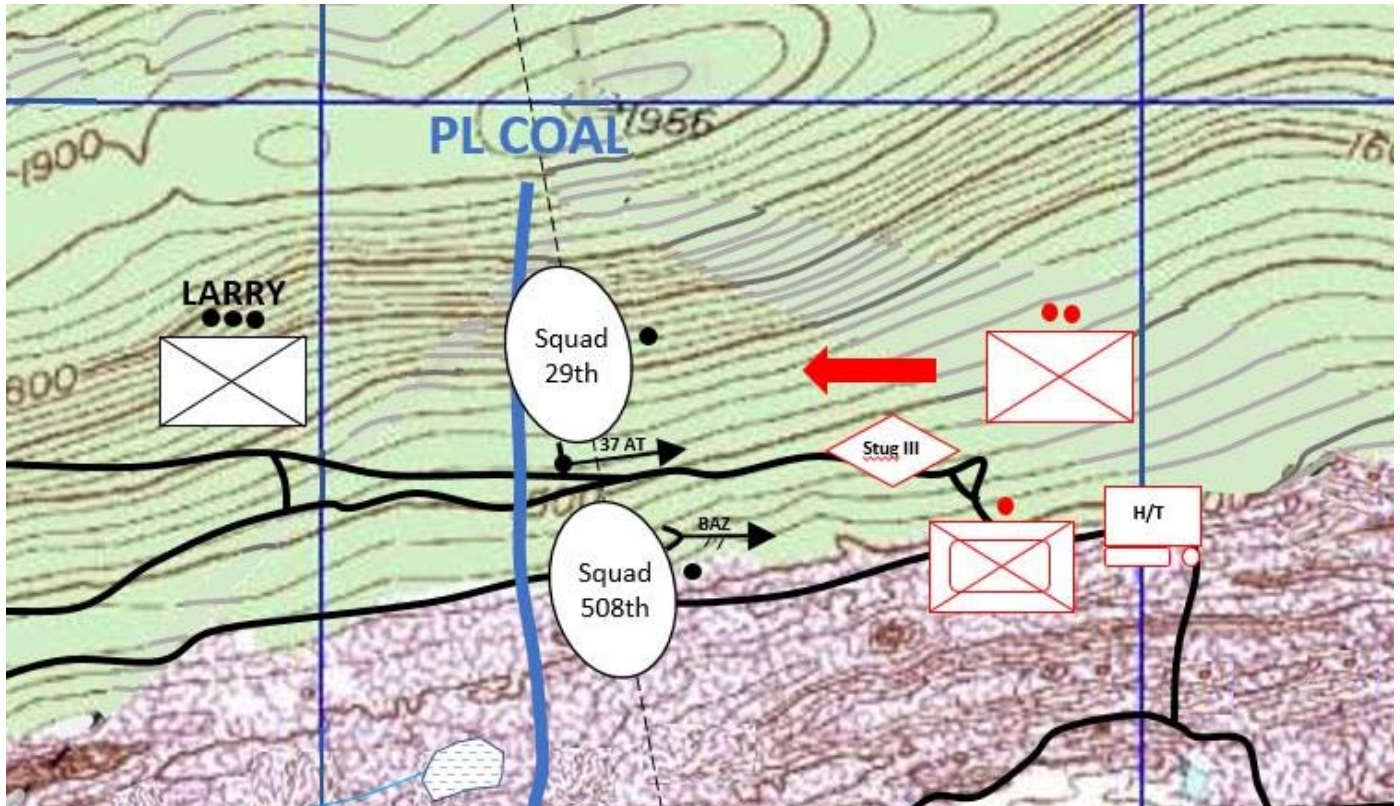
“Teams”. Ok, a little better. I’ve renamed some things. The “TF” designation has been assigned to “Shemp” representing a *company* (I know, “Team” still doesn’t work here either but bear with me) of three platoons. There is no cross-attachment of armor here to make a true “Team”, but again, bear with me. Moe, Larry and Curly are now “Teams”, yet still more accurately, *PLATOONS*, since they maneuver as such. Thus Shemp is now in command of three *PLATOONS*. The numbers on Saturday still did not really equal a platoon in each “Team”, but each “Team” is now organized as platoon of at least 2 squads, plus support, so the concept works somewhat. Ideally, “Shemp” should be downgraded from “TF” to “CC” (“Company Commander”) and we should lose the designation “Teams”, but “TF” and “Teams” still sound cool, and their compositions are now much more realistic, given the actual numbers (yes, numbers are always a bitch).

And as applied, the Team names served a useful purpose on Saturday. Each commander also used the Team name as the radio call sign, so each unit was easily identified on the radio net, and on the command map riding with Shemp. Also, these initial call signs, effective at 0930, were changed at 1100 to Ape, Gorilla and Monkey, with Shemp now Gibbon, right to left respectively. There was another change at 1230, to Hardy, Laurel and Abbott, with Gibbon now Costello. This was initiated to prevent the Germans from reading comms over the air, since there were two nets used, one German, one Allied, on different frequencies; but, since air/artillery strikes were resolved by calling into the opposing net with coordinates, frequencies could accidentally/intentionally be left open, and security compromised.

*Team Larry (aka Platoon Larry)*



Here we have an effective platoon blocking force on Phase Line COAL. (I'm using my own platoon as an example; the other TFs/Teams/platoons likely set up much the same way on their own Phase Lines.) The German armor and vehicles would be confined to the roads, since the slopes especially to the left were steep as you can see, and the terrain very rocky and tree-infested. Also, the squad interval was much closer; since grids are only one-half mile square, I could only make the map graphic so big, otherwise we lose perspective. The 29<sup>th</sup> was set up closer to the 37mm AT gun; the 508<sup>th</sup> was set up much closer to the road on its left. The AT gun, effectively part of the 508<sup>th</sup>, was run poorly (more on that later) but functioned somewhat independently, so it was something of a 3<sup>rd</sup> squad directed by our platoon NCO. The 508<sup>th</sup> had a bazooka, which proved to be the most effective weapon of the day.

*Morning Attack on Team Larry*

This was typical of all actions of the northern flank throughout the day, although each had slightly different results. (Note there are no OP/LPs, which were deemed unnecessary due to the small grid size; Phase Lines served as both MLRs and LDs; and since this was a defensive action, there is no Axis of Advance.) The Germans led with their Stug III and halftrack (both from Gross Deutschland) on the road, with a section of SS foot infantry on our left, and the squad of armored infantry from the halftrack on our right. The Stug III pinned down the 37mm AT, which was run poorly by an untrained crew, with main gun fire and the crew MG 42; the halftrack hosed the rest of us with its own MG 42, pinning us down as well. When the Stug III started to move into range, the bazooka came out of cover and took it out, and the halftrack then took out the bazooka. That left the only leg infantry of the 29<sup>th</sup> and the 508<sup>th</sup>, which, without artillery support (Team Leader Larry made a radio call but it was not answered), were shortly overrun.

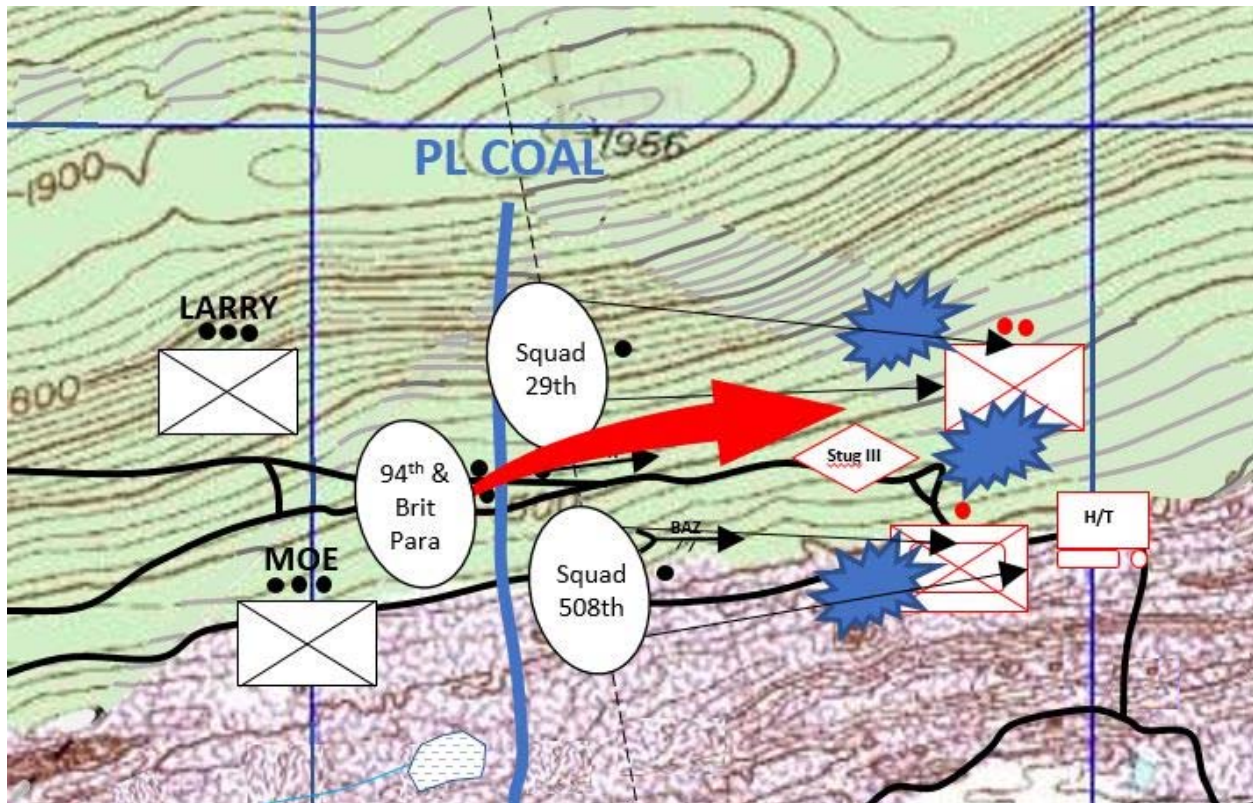
And this went on three more times, for each Team. The pattern was, once a Team was overrun, it would leapfrog/recycle back to the second-most Phase Line behind them, to let the next Team be assaulted and overrun, and there to await the next battle.

And again. And again, and again.

Boring, right? Right. That's what my guys from the 29<sup>th</sup> said. Predictable. The tactics worked at the platoon level, yes, but there were no maneuver options, other than shoot, die, and recycle.

So, what to do?

*The Maneuver Proposal -- Counterattack*



Here's an option. It could work with the numbers we had on Saturday, but especially so, if we had the manpower and the firepower that we lost collectively Saturday morning.

Leave Team Larry in place, with hopefully more firepower including 2 .30-cals, one connecting the right flank of the 29<sup>th</sup>, the other the left flank of the 508<sup>th</sup>. (Also train up the 508<sup>th</sup> to run their own damned gun.) If not, we go with what we got. Place Team Moe (94<sup>th</sup> and Brit Paras) behind both the 29<sup>th</sup> and the 508<sup>th</sup> squads as a reserve reactive force, centrally on the road but under cover. When the Stug moves, the Bazooka takes it out if possible; at the same time, call in an artillery strike on the center of the German position and increase the volume of suppressing fire from the 29<sup>th</sup> and the 508<sup>th</sup>. When the Germans are thoroughly pinned, unleash Team Moe through the center, hard and fast, and the 29<sup>th</sup> and 508<sup>th</sup> will continue their suppressive fire and then move forward to mop any enemy survivors.

Unfortunately, given the terrain, Team Moe's best option is only through the center. The left flank along the road is too steep for an effective reaction force; same with the right. The only and best option is hard right up the middle.

But it could work, *IF* the Stug is taken out. *IF* the artillery strike happens (this, along with two other attempts that day didn't, no idea why) and pins down the enemy infantry. *IF* there is sufficient suppressive fire and *IF* the reserve force reacts *quickly and decisively*. At worst, it at least provides a maneuver option to greatly enhance your fighting and dying, while eliminating the repetitiveness.

In theory, it works, and of course nothing screws up a plan like contact. But at least it's a *plan*, even if only a FRAGO.

What likely has to happen, at some time, is the Allies *WILL* have to fall back to another phase line – but they’ll fall back as a natural result of withdrawal, not just a “revive and repeat” cycle of short actions that all look alike. Variety is the spice (or the scotch and seegars) of reenacting. We hope.

***Positives and Negatives of ALL of the Above, Northern Flank***

This is an AAR, after all, but again it’s not a WW2-style AAR. It’s more of Dry Prong, Louisiana 1941 AAR, or even a modern-day TX AAR, meant to evaluate capabilities and recommend solutions of an *operation*, not just describe the burning of powder and the getting of tick bites. We want to move forward with what we have, build on our successes, and reduce the undesirable.

*Positives*

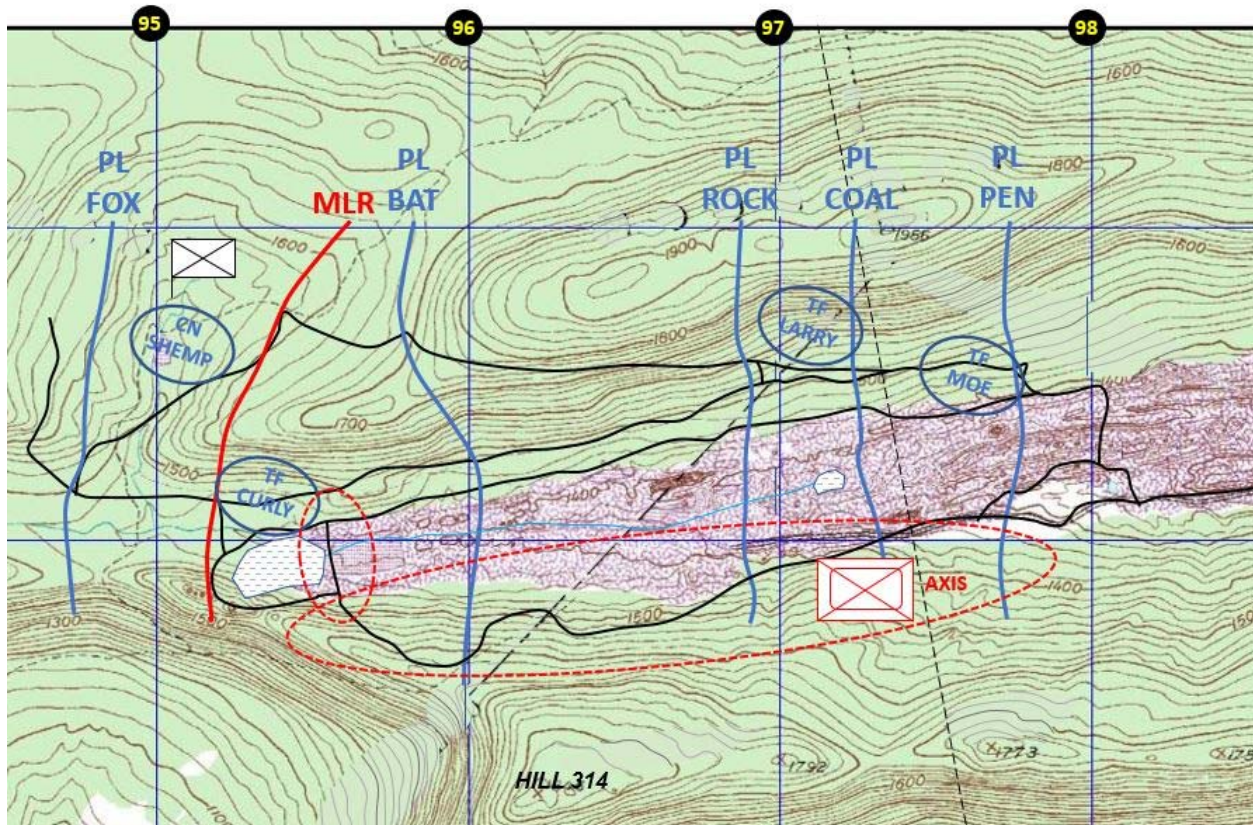
1. Very strong command net with effective leadership.
2. Strong of chain of command, meaning clear subordinate structure.
3. Faith in the ability of senior NCOs – allowing them to “run their own shows”.
4. Willingness to “play the game” – i.e., take your hits and play fair.

*Negatives*

1. Unit assignments not organized along clear concepts – they’re platoons, not “TFs” or “Teams”.
2. Not enough maneuver possibilities, but that’s partly a terrain issue, and also see above.
3. Downside to letting NCOs “run their own shows” – not enough direction from platoon leaders (in my case, Larry) on immediate actions; too much left to chance.
4. No reactive/reserve force for counterattack.
5. Actions too repetitive and predictable.
6. Better net required for artillery/air strikes – calls were unanswered.
7. Some units need to be trained in the basics of their jobs – I’m thinking of the 508<sup>th</sup> and their 37mm AT gun. Learn it, test it, run it. Period.

All that said, the event on the northern flank at least was still productive, positive, and stimulating. More actions happened that day on the northern flank than I’m describing, but again, this AAR is designed to give examples of what happened often, to reinforce the positives, and suggest solutions to the negatives. Everyone I have spoken to on and since that day have said they will come back, and the 29<sup>th</sup> will as well. The former Gap II organizers did a fine job all in all, working with what was left after the minor morning bailouts. But there’s always room for improvement.

### Part 2: The Southern Flank



Here's the rough start position of TF Curly, which contained the preponderance of the Allied armor – a Humber MkIV heavy reconnaissance car (“HRC”), and Humber MkIII C LRC, 2 Weasels, 3 jeeps, and various wheeled transports from the 15<sup>th</sup> Recce, the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, and infantry from the 506<sup>th</sup> PIR, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions. Facing them was an Axis force of a Panzer III, Stug IV, halftrack, armored car, various other wheeled vehicle and much foot infantry. The main battle areas are indicated by the dotted red line ovals, with the Axis forces starting to the right. The battle area was constricted because of the wet conditions. Even though we fought on a sunny day, the torrential rain of Friday – especially Friday night – inundated the ground north of the large oval and made much of the ground between the south road and the purple mine area very boggy. Only fully tracked vehicles could negotiate the ground, and then only gingerly, since no one wanted to have any toys get sucked into unseen quicksand. The areas near Hill 314, and to the left and right, were out of bounds (apparently there were turkey hunters who had contracted the use of that land that day but were gone by our start time; nonetheless . . .). There were also two points of egress across the purple area in the small oval, facilitated by two bridges, but apparently one was too light to handle heavy vehicles, so that constricted the area even further. Otherwise, battle sawed mostly across the larger oval all day.

I won't go into blow-by-blow descriptions, since I wasn't on that flank and didn't witness battles directly. What I can describe are the main positive and negative issues of the *whole* battle overall.



**Negatives**

**1. Allied Mobile Radio Communications**

(Normally I go with the positives first, but I want to save them for last.) Radio communications within an armored or mobile unit are more critical than with an infantry unit because, well, they're mobile – unit commanders need to know where their assets are at all times since positions can change miles within minutes. Infantry can stay in place for days. Mobile units are meant to *move*. That's standard doctrine. Radio comms, if they don't work, can make life confusing and damaging, and apparently, for several reasons, that occurred. It may have been human error, unfamiliar equipment, improper frequency, improper discipline, line-of-sight issues, insubordination, inexperience, or any combination thereof. But radio comms, besides the boggy terrain, was the biggest issue. Individual units of vehicles did not receive instructions, or didn't relay positions, or execute orders, and such. That said, radio communications worked well at times, so not all was lost; but what is needed, is more experience working with radio communications, which unfortunately only happens when you have other vehicles to talk to, and that happens only at tacticals . . . er, training exercises. Also, a backup radio system might work better in such terrain. We're trying to identify and rectify problems, right? Right.

**2. Map Issues**

Ah, map issues. I haven't yet shown you a scan of what the working map looked like, but here it is now:



Wow. Yeah. WOW. Black. Everywhere. Maybe you can read my post-event scribbles. I'm sure I can't. Mostly, it's just night everywhere. Except for the grid system and road net. The thick yellow line indicates the total battle area for the day; anything outside of that was out of bounds. Still, few could identify anything even according to the road net, since there were no other identifiable features, and the grid system was really useful only for calling in artillery/air strikes, or identifying if a friendly unit occupied a particular grid to avoid friendly fire . . . or not, provided you trusted the road net. How can you tell, though, if it's *all night*? The participant commanders on the southern flank had issues with that. The northern flank, not so much, since the road net corresponding to the phase lines allowed for better identification of grids. Still, a clear topo map (I wonder where you can get that, hmmm?), scaled usefully, with identifying landmarks, bridge weight information and wet areas marked on an "overlay", coordinated with compass information, *and* with a home-drawn grid system superimposed, would likely be far more useful than the all night, all the time, original map.

### 3. *Lack of a Command Meeting*

I realize the weather played a great role in limiting the time available for a command meeting. Many of the important participants did not arrive until close to start time, and what little briefing they received consisted mostly of being handed the above map and a radio, assigned a call sign, and given an introduction to the units comprising individual Teams. Perhaps what could have helped would have been a conference call a week earlier between the major Allied players – the TF leader, the Team Leaders, and the senior unit NCOs, with maps provided beforehand either via email or snail mail – and then those senior unit leaders communicating downward to their own troops, via their own "OPORD" (more on writing OPORDs and FRAGOs in a later GO article). Not all details need to be distributed to all personnel in the chain, but far better that, at least, than nothing at all, at 0900 Saturday.

### 4. *Lack of Mobile Unit Training*

Well, that's a hard one. It's hard even just for the leg units, since we can often get together for an event of any kind only just a few times a year, let alone for a *training* event (whoever wants to train?). But training is the only way individuals learn to work with other individuals, for the purpose of working together as a *unit*. For infantry that's an easy proposition – all you need to bring is yourself (provided you're even at all willing to train and *learn*). But armor units are designed by nature and purpose to be mobile, and also *not* operate as single vehicles. For individuals *with* vehicles – and let's face it, a single vehicle 99.9% of the time is owned by a *single* person – well, training *en masse* with other vehicles is just *never* going to happen. Plus, to make a realistic event, tactical, TX or otherwise, we would need several of the same type of vehicles – M4s, M3 halftracks, M8 scout cars and so forth, organized at least as two sections, maybe platoons – and that likewise is just *never* going to happen.

So, what must be done to overcome the tactical problem, mobile-unit wise?

*Study.*

In the Reference Library of ReenactorPro.org (and since you're reading this article in General Orders, you are familiar with the website) you will find annotated manuals on armored force tactics, such as FM 17-10 Armored Force Tactics and Techniques, FM 17-42 Armored Infantry Battalion, and perhaps the two most important, FM 17-33 The Armored Battalion and "ARMOR FOR REENACTORS". Of all these, FM 17-33 is the most important, since it really addresses the *operational* level of mobile units, not

just the tactical (for that, go to FM 17-30 Tank Platoon). We'll never see battalions of armor anywhere in our reenacting lives, but that doesn't preclude the necessity of *understanding* the concept of the battalion as a maneuver element. Just as a squad of infantry must learn the concepts of the platoon and company to operate tactically, so must the operator/commander of a single tank or halftrack learn the concepts of the platoons, squadrons or companies, and the tactics therein, to operate effectively at a tactical . . . er, training exercise. And that, as I have said before, is the best use of what we do in the field. Besides having fun.

Also, while we're at it, it's also a good idea for the *infantry* elements, as well as the mobile ones, to have a look at FM 100-5 Operations, which discusses the broad *combined arms* doctrine as applied in WW2, for guidance on planning and execution. It's counterpart, FM 101-5 Staff Officers' Field Manual, The Staff and Combat Orders, Chapter 2, gives you the nuts and bolts of developing combat orders. A lot of reading, yes; but everything we do begins with *doctrine*, and since we've all sworn to "honor the veteran", the best we can do is understand *why* he did *what* he did. It's not only about the uniforms and the bang-bang.

### ***Positives***

#### ***1. Allied Mobile Radio Communications***

Ok, I slammed them before, now I'm going to praise them. At least, there was an attempt to impose a radio protocol; most TXs give you nothing, other than maybe ONE two-way radio. This was a BIG step in the right direction, as it was for the infantry units on the northern flank. An improved radio net, coupled with a clearer understanding of employing mobile units, will improve overall results greatly.

#### ***2. Maps, and Strong Operational Plans***

Yeah, I know, I just slammed them too, now I'm going to praise them – that is, at least the effort to develop and use a topo map, and operational plans. Again, most TXs are just "stumbling around in the woods, looking for trigger time". Not at Hazleton. The organizers have a strong sense of what needs to happen to make an event run well, and to keep participants coming back. Developing a strong plan, supplemented by clear map work and good top-down communications (which admittedly could have been better, but weren't for reasons stated earlier) will stop a TX from descending into chaos, fast. What happens after that, when we hit the go-button, is how well these plans are executed – and plans can get shot through for any number of reasons, to which many will say, "yeah, but that's realistic, so why have one". Well, yes, that happened, often. But it's not fun, and we don't learn by starting with *nothing*. Start with something, run it, see what happens, and improve it. OPORD, then FRAGO.

#### ***3. Allied Command Structure, and an Understanding of Combined Arms***

The Allied command structure was clear, clean and consistent. It didn't always work as planned, but that takes practice, and training. We've just now had one training exercise. With time, analysis and practice (meaning more TXs), it will get better.

What will take a bit of time and practices, though, will be the application of *combined arms*. The command structure understands it, but it's hard to apply when there is also an armor/mobile component that needs to apply it to itself, firstly, and then back up the chain, when there are few vehicles

participating, and none of them organized into a single cohesive unit – a division recon unit, say, which uses M8s and jeeps, of which we have many, especially jeeps. If any M4 tanks show up – well, we’ll have to incorporate them as best we can, since doctrinally they did not operate singly. Oh, to have a single M4 platoon, now that would be heaven . . .

#### *4. Adaptability on the part of all participants, especially command.*

As I noted before, due to weather issues, nearly 1/3 of the participants dropped out, which changed the event plans dramatically. There were fewer Allies than expected especially for both the northern and southern flanks, and thus the event planners had to make rapid changes on the fly to get a decent event to work out so that everybody could have some fun. It did mean repetition to some degree, especially on the northern flank; but, had Allied tactics there been implemented more in line with how *platoons* operate, rather than *task forces*, there could have been more variety. Live and learn, but that’s what an AAR is for.

#### *5. A Willingness to “Play the Game”*

Reenactors can be an egotistical, persnickety bunch, who hate to be told what to do, where to go, and who to follow, if not assigned within their own unit structures (I did U.S. airborne for many years, believe me, I *know*). Some of this comes simply from a lack of understanding of how the military operates. It’s not a democracy, it’s not even a republic. It’s not a dictatorship, either, but there are orders, and an expectation that orders will be followed, that no one goes “rogue” or “cowboy”. It means there must be a willingness to subordinate yourself, and your wants and expectations, to the higher organization, for the greater good of that organization and event. Mostly, that subordination happened. Again, it takes understanding and practice. Give it time and stay the course.

#### ***The Final Take Away***

Back to the James Jones quote, at the beginning – combat is an intensely personal experience. Everyone sees everything only within their own sphere of participation and remembers each thing differently from the soldier lying next to them. The foregoing was my experience. But I was an “umpire”, who, under the normal definition during a tactical exercise, sees, judges and *reports* on what he is assigned to see. For a truer picture, we need more “umpires”, or at least people willing to report accurately on what happened in *their* world, and not just with opinions posted on Facebook. Later on, in this issue of GO, there will be a short article on writing a simple AAR, far simpler than what has been presented here; and in the near future, there will be a “training circular” (TC) posted to the Reference Library on ReenactorPor.org describing how to write a fuller AAR along the principles of what has, in modern parlance, become known as “METT-T” – Mission, Enemy, Terrain/Weather, Troops/Support, and Time. What will be very useful for any commander (“organizers”) of future events would be, again, the study of FM 100-5 Operations, first of all, and then FM 101-5 Staff and Combat Orders. The latter reads more like a rules book for a modern military board game with detail that would kill a water buffalo, but fortunately the annotated version in the ReenactorPro.org Reference Library makes this bearable. Hopefully, such AAR versions will be developed and used to create better and stronger . . . um, “tacticals”.

That said, there is absolutely nothing about the April 2019 Hazleton event that was inherently bad, that hasn’t affected other TXs . . . um, tacticals in the past, and which the Hazleton organizers overcame to a great degree. Mostly, the day was all good, with a few hiccups and structural oddities. With

map upgrades, command refinements, better comms, studying the manuals (remember, they were written at a time when many U.S. Army soldiers had nothing more than an eight-grade education; if they learned from those manuals, we can too), and adjusting your headspaces to fit the caliber of the event's ambitions, this event can do nothing but grow. If we talk it up positively, learn our jobs, and keep the faith, maybe we can get more armor to show up . . . more infantry . . . and raise the bar for TXs, at least on our side of the world.

*Saddle up!* as John Wayne would say. It will be worth the ride.

— *Lynn Kessler*

## SPECIAL SECTION: AAR REPORTS

### Or, Everything You Need to Report On, and Make, a Better Tactical (TX, that is . . .)



*Writing a useful AAR means more than just reporting on who did what, when, and where. It takes understanding of the mission, and how it affects the role of the unit you're reporting on., so you can create a useful evaluation of what happened. Without that, events cannot grow.*

As reenactors, most of us don't have either the experience, or the tools, to create and run a tactical (um, "training exercise", or TX) effectively. But that's changing, slowly. It's evolving gradually because most of us don't understand what goes into the creation of the tactical *mission*, first of all, and second, the detailed execution of the resulting *field order*. That requires study, and that takes time and effort, and can be intimidating. ReenactorPro.org is here to take the guesswork out of all that, but it's also here to provide simple how-to's, in the content of General Orders, so read on.

First, if you haven't taken (or at least looked at) the Operations Course under "Continuing Education" on ReenactorPro.org, do so now. Pay close attention to all four Operations Course "Lessons" more so than the lessons' quizzes. Because what you'll be reporting on in a good AAR is more than just the bang-bang of what happened in a blow-by-blow format. Depending on the level you are at (from commander to Private Snuffy), you need to understand the planning of your unit's mission or at least your role in it, how the field plans lay out on the maps, the estimates of the situation, and how the battle flows according to the overall plan (the *field order*, now called OPORD). If you get all that, and report on those elements, you'll have a useful AAR.

#### ***The Format of the WW2-style AAR***

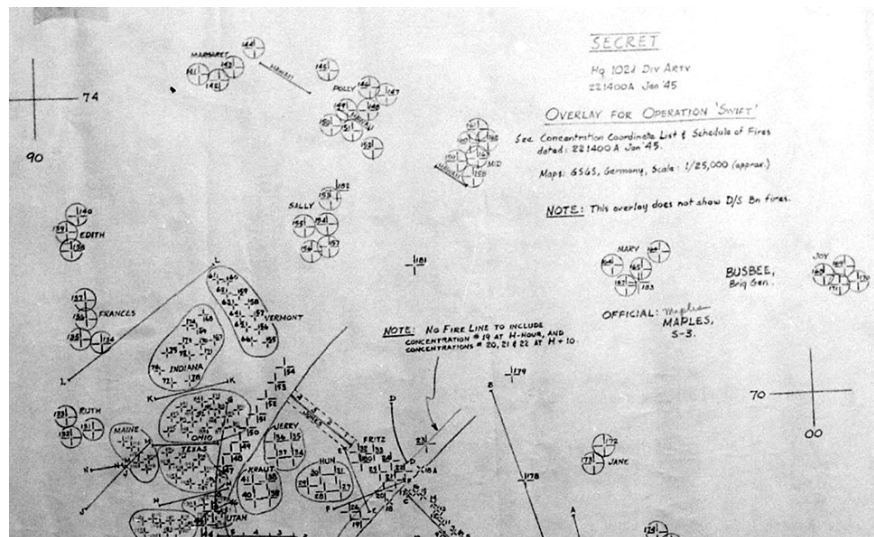
On ReenactorPro, in the Resource Library, in the WW2 FM 101-5, The Staff Officer's Field Manual, The Staff and Combat Orders, you will find an abridged section of Chapter 2, Combat Orders, Section IV, Forms. "Form 19" provides an "Outline for Unit Report" – this is the WW2-style AAR. Besides unit housekeeping elements, Form 19 addresses the essential elements of information that are critical to evaluating the success of the mission. The following is an abbreviated list of the minimum elements you need to report on:

- Maps
- The ENEMY
  - Units in contact
  - Enemy reserves, if any
  - Enemy activity
  - Enemy strength, material, morale, knowledge
  - Conclusion covering plans still open to the enemy (what the bastard *might* do)
- Your OWN Situation
  - Front line and advanced elements
  - Location of troops, command posts, boundaries
  - Adjacent units
  - Brief description of operations for HQ evaluation
  - Concise estimate of combat efficiency
  - Result of operations during period covered by report

There are more elements to address that come under “Administration” and “General”, but they really don’t apply to reenactors – strength of command, replacements, casualties, prisoners, supply (although beer and evening chow is important). What the above dashed and bulleted elements ask for, particularly the *last*, is how well did *mission* work out. This is usually what current reenactor-written AARs *do not provide*. They never address what can be *improved*, and what can be *expanded upon*. That is the true function of the AAR.

It’s important to have as many eyes on the field as possible, to paint as complete a picture as possible, with as many AARs as possible, of the execution of any operation. Think Dry Prong, Louisiana late summer 1940 and 1941, or the Carolina maneuvers in the fall of 1941. There were dozens of umpires, whose purpose, besides identifying who just got killed, was to participate in evaluating the premises of the field exercise. But it took a *plan* – in those days, an *operation plan* (now OPLAN) – from which the *combat orders* (now OPORD) were developed, to reveal what was good, and bad. And it wasn’t that bad. Concepts, ideas, assumptions, techniques needed to be tested and improved upon. The same thing happens with a TX . . . er, tactical. Build it, run it, evaluate it with an AAR, improve it and run it again.

And don’t forget the overlays . . .



— Sgt. Drilldich

## IMPROVING THE IMPRESSION

### Working with Others – Or What to Do When the S\*\*\* Hits the Fan

*Working with others is rarely easy. Differing personalities, individual circumstances, situations, interpretations and expectations often complicate interpersonal relations and make working in a cohesive manner a challenging process. In re-enacting, especially at events where small teams are often thrown into larger formations, the challenge of forging cohesiveness is critical to mission success. In this article, Rich Lees puts together some guidelines to follow and consider when thrown into command of a motley group of re-enactors whose culture, standards and training may differ from one's own.*



The GAP was a wonderful event. You either loved it or hated it or loved to hate it. Whatever your take on it was, it will be missed. Last GAP I was on I was unwittingly shoved into a command role of a coalition of troops. Luckily via social media and past interactions all of us in our varying groups sorted out billets, command structure and administration beforehand so we were familiar with each other.

At the beginning of the event, Major Terry Hunter was commanding, and I was CSM. My job was simple, keep up unit standards. Run the weekend like I would any other course or exercise. Easy peasy. I had my core NCO's to take care of the troops. I knew who was coming and what positions they held in their units. My job was to do

an authenticity check, safety check, ammo check, and march them down to the buses. Once to the field I just had to keep people from freezing, make sure they were fed and watered and put out the occasional helmet fire.

Major Terry Hunter was attending Thursday night's O-groups along with myself and his runner (usually a new guy at his first big event). I am there as the CSM but I half-listened to what was being said, because, quite honestly, they seemed a bit long in the tooth and I didn't understand most of the jargon. I got peeled off to another O-group while the battle plans were being passed. The O-Group I attend with other Sr. NCO's was about troop safety, I listen, knowing that Terry will pass on his info later in the barracks.

It's now Friday morning at the Gap. O-Groups are over, the buses are being loaded and it's time for another tactical. I for one loved the Friday tactical. It's a small-scale rehearsal for the next day's big event. It gives the unit a day to shake off the cobwebs and lets us loosely interact with the other lucky guys who have the time and gumption come out. Our team had been selected and as usual it's a motley bunch. We have the Poles, elements of 15<sup>th</sup> Scottish Recce, 1 Can Para, Brit Para, a couple of French Resistance, and the 9<sup>th</sup> Punjabi Elephant Brigade, a cross dresser named Shasta and every other oddball



unit the organizers can jam in there because they don't fit the GI mould. But hey we are Commonwealth and the feeling is nobody really understands what we bring to the table, or our capabilities, and organization. Command will just strip us of our armour anyway and send us off to some far forgotten corner of the line, such is our lot in life.

I am relaxed though. Terry is more than capable of the leadership role we have dumped on him. Between him, me and the others attending, we have enough blanks and corporate knowledge to make this a fun day. Go to the field, teach the new guys, have fun, be safe. All is good until suddenly I hear Terry shout to me and to my horror the day's tactical has taken its first casualty. Terry is at the bottom of the stairs and his knee is twice its normal size. He tells me he has to sit this one out and I have to take command.

*Mother-Fornicator what now.*



Given the challenges of an ad hoc motley group, not only within my own unit but with other units under my stead, it is important to remain focused on the task at hand. In fact, in order to maximise productivity and minimize tensions, there are a number of principles that can assist with providing the proper mindset when working with others. I must review some of the basic leadership truths that were instilled on me when it comes to working with others.

**Be Patient.** My tempo will not be the valid blueprint of success. Impatience and trying to force others to work at my accepted rhythm can be counterproductive. I must be mentally prepared to adapt to the unique set of circumstances that are present. Patience and self-discipline will do more to mission success than a frenzied approach that will aggravate the situation than contribute to a solution.

**Be Adaptive and manage your expectations.** The key here is to realize that not only am I here to lead, but also to work with other units and others within my unit. They will determine the tempo or aggressiveness of our actions. They come with different resources, training and organizational culture. It is my task to learn as much about them as possible, develop a plan to meet the aim of the mission. Upon execution I may have to adjust but don't let it frustrate me. Be open-minded and agile so I can re-jig the plan as necessary.

**Actions speak louder than words, talk is cheap.** We all know that guy who is a big talker and how great and awesome he is in his own mind. If you are thrust into command one thing is simple, never explain what you can demonstrate. No one asked for your resume. The sooner you can show you are expert at what you do the sooner they will give you their undivided attention. The flip side of this is that although you may have been given an unfamiliar motley bunch or a group that talks a big talk, you must observe them to see if their actions and ability to react will meet the demands you place on them. Always have the mindset that your tactical plans may need to be adjusted in order to achieve the greatest effect.

**Appreciate that perception is more important than reality.** You may be the most prominent expert in re-enacting there is, a part of the best and most personable group ever, and your thread count is on point and you're 1944 head to toe. However, the people you are attached to may see the event as a

waste of time and you and your group as the most arrogant, pompous over-rated second-rate players ever. Your task will be difficult. You need to care about what the others think, keep abreast of attitudes and aggressively clear up any grievances.

Communication will be key. Communicate the 5 W's (Who, What, Where, When, and Why) as well as How. Explain changes, address misconceptions, and never assume your impression of yourself or activity is the same as everyone else's. But above all try to continually do your best.

**Remember that the message sent is not always the message that is received, and it is the message that is received which is the message that is acted upon.** In other words, was it lost in translation? Is the intended recipient actually understanding and acting on what you said? Was something lost in the jargon, slang and concepts we are familiar with but have a different meaning? I see this all the time as I come to events and try to understand "American". How is my Canadian jargon being translated? I understand the situation, but why can't you? What did I leave out of my communication? Like my teenage daughter said to me one day: "It's obvious to you, dad, but you need to use your words and not assume I know what I am doing."



**See the world through the eyes of those with whom you are interacting.** Assumptions and priorities will vary significantly from those with whom you are working. My assumptions are not your assumptions. Things I take for granted (kit, transport, radios, training/experience, well-endowed manhood) may be a major challenge to others. If you start every sentence with "Far be it for me..." or "I don't mean to be rude..." you should stop immediately and assess the situation. You don't need to accept another group's style or standards. Just understand them and how it may affect their attitudes and behaviours and yours too.

**Do not judge the behaviour of others and, instead observe, learn and try to understand.** Do not be arrogant or superior. How many times have you heard "that's not how we do things"? Their way is not necessarily the wrong way. It's just not *your* way. Don't tell others how to do their task. Something that may work well for your unit may not fit for another. However, **DO NOT GIVE ANYONE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT.** Check and confirm that they have the requisite skill/knowledge/background/qualification required before undertaking an activity that is questionable or hazardous.

**Always be respectful.** How you treat and interact with others is important. Treating others with respect conveys a valuable message of not only what you, but also your organization, deems is important. It's an enabler that generates goodwill, cooperation and friendship. Lack of respect will deteriorate these factors and we see it all the time. Examples are that officer that comes out of nowhere who's barking some command at you and you have no idea who this guy is. To top it off, he is contradicting the orders you were just given. Another example is the unit that thinks it's too good to follow the rules or take hits.



Respectfulness demonstrates professionalism and helps to foster bonds that create personal and organizational networks. Lack of it deteriorates these factors.

**Deal With frustrations privately.**

Discuss the frustration and pet peeves with your inner circle in private when those you are attached with are not around. In the presence of others remain cool calm and patient. This will earn trust and strengthens unit relationships.

**Do not adhere to unrealistic standards.** Excellence is a noble pursuit and mediocrity should never be accepted. Why do we spend thousands of dollars on this hobby if we aren't going to do it right? We must be conscious of the time, resources, realities and how much each individual can realistically achieve. Improvement should be incremental; these steps to improve should be accepted and applauded. Excellence can only be achieved if your foundation is solid; this takes time and experience. In other words, do your best, learn from your mistakes and don't beat yourself up.

To put it lightly, I placed what I could in my brain and tried to lead as best I could. Give each unit a chance to fight the good fight. It wasn't perfect, I made mistakes and did not heed my own advice at times; I lost my cool and got shot for it by a sniper looking for someone who was giving orders. He said I was losing my shit and said that guy has to be in charge. I saw the shot, took off my helmet and learned my lesson the hard way. I also made an old man run. I yelled at a guy wearing coke bottles for glasses because he couldn't see the enemy. I got us in a jam between Germans who were shooting at us and GI's who shot before they looked. But I sucked backed and relaxed and placed us in the best position possible and fought like hell until we were hit or our ammo ran out. We had fun. We got accolades from the opposing force and made our way back to our lines just in time for the GAP to end abruptly forever.

This was our swansong and I was honoured and humbled to take part in the role that fate had chosen for me. Take leadership seriously, but not yourself. You'll be better off for it.



*Rich Lees joined the Canadian Army at 16 in 1988 and served both in the Infantry (North Nova Scotia Highlanders) and Royal Canadian Armoured Corps (8th Canadian Hussars). He switched trades and services and joined the Royal Canadian Air Force where he has accumulated over 2800 flying hours on the C-17 as a Loadmaster with 429 Sqn. He is still serving as a Warrant Officer and resides in Brockville Ontario Canada with his ever patient and understanding wife Jackie. Rich has been re-enacting for the past 13 years and is always seeking to improve his impression and knowledge within the hobby. You can usually find him with his 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion impression or as a North Nova Scotia Highlander depending on the event.*

## IMPROVING THE IMPRESSION

### Leadership In Reenacting:

#### *The Constellation of Leadership Qualities in Military Living History*

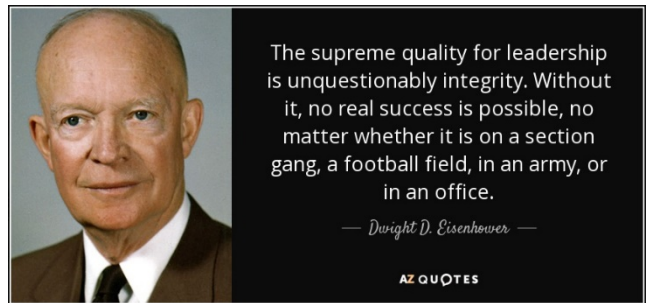
*Not long ago, members of my home unit met at the U.S. Army Heritage Center in Carlisle, Pennsylvania for a leadership seminar. One of the concluding activities was to define leadership in terms of its application to military living history. We are presenting this document not as a last word on leadership, since, in our hobby of military living history, there is a junction between portraying/acting in a military manner and leading volunteers in an organization. This presents a unique set of leadership challenges. Hobby leadership cannot rely upon the Code of Military Justice to get men to follow orders. The leader must be of such quality that men will want to follow his direction.*

*What we defined is both a constellation and a web of sorts, of positive leadership traits. These traits support one another and overlap in many instances; but all contribute to the central quality.*

— Scot Buffington

#### **Integrity**

We agreed with Eisenhower's statement before we read his quote. We found that this attribute is the central-most, and from which all other positive traits are derived. It is in this way that integrity has many definitions. It is the quality of having strong moral principles and being honest. It is a personal choice. It is judged solely by actions and not words.



Integrity comes from the Latin root *integer*, which loosely translates into English as *whole*, or a *part of the whole*. In modern understanding it describes the wholeness of the combination of honesty and moral direction. We humans are always searching for integrity. Symbolic logic and mathematics are obsessed with it. Science is not science without it. Aristotle said that because rulers have power they would be tempted to use it for personal gain. It is important that politicians withstand this temptation, and that requires integrity. Philosophy and psychology are interested in integrity. Popular psychology identifies personal integrity, professional integrity, artistic integrity, and intellectual integrity. Educational instruction and assessment seek integrity in content reliability and validity coefficients that would make Einstein smile.

How does this apply to us and how we choose our leaders? We seek leaders from people who know the difference between right and wrong. We demand honesty. We want our leaders that have the moral flexibility to work towards being a better man, and to lead us to want to better ourselves through him. Integrity is both a condition and a quest. We want individual leaders who admit when they are



wrong and work towards resolving his mistakes. Our leaders must be brave enough to face their own mistakes and learn from them, as everyone should.

We do not want leaders who place blame on others, especially subordinates. We want leaders who can admit they do not know the answer to a question instead of making something up. We seek leaders who can display their moral authority by being an exemplary character rather than assert it.

Integrity in leadership may at times require that leader to step down and aside when his own effectiveness is compromised, or a better man is discovered. This is most difficult for

hobbyists. A man's own ego may prevent this, or a fear of relinquishing his position, or a fear of consequence in a change of leadership, or a variety of reasons. However, an honest man who values his own integrity will place the needs of the whole above his own aspirations. Only then can he maintain his own integrity.

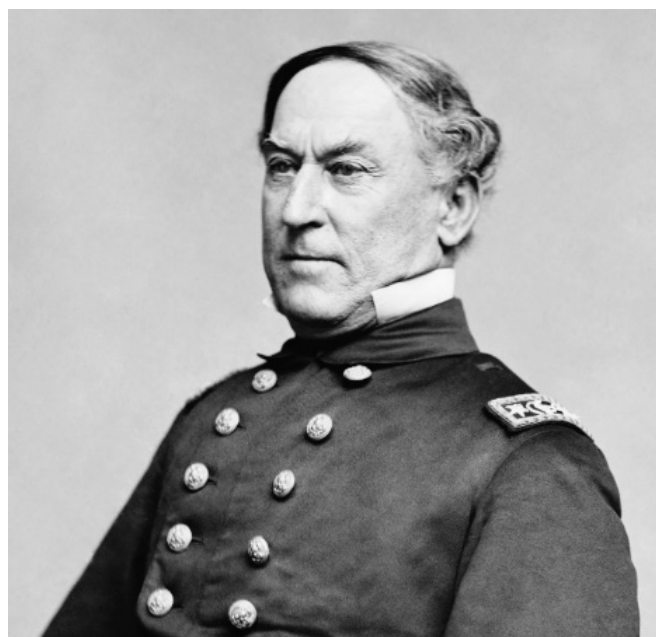
In summary, we want honest men who are also honest with themselves. We want leaders who know their own strengths and limitations. We want leaders who have moral strength who do not need to point out their superiority. If a man lacks integrity, he is useless as a leader, for this is something that cannot be taught in a classroom, nor developed on the battlefield. Honor can be won. Integrity defines the man.

### ***Knowledgeable***

“Remember also that one of the requisite studies for an officer is man. Where your analytical geometry will serve you once, knowledge of men will serve you daily. As a commander, to get the right man in the right place is one of the questions of success or defeat.”

—David Farragut

We demand that our living history leaders will know something about the history of what we are trying to portray. This has to be a combination of knowledge of clothing, gear, field craft, tactics, unit history, general history, and military tradition. History is inexhaustible. One can study another person of historical note his



whole life and die not knowing everything about that one person. Your leader cannot know everything. But as hobbyists we tend to migrate toward leaders from whom we can learn something integral to our “impressions.”

Knowledge, however, can be deleterious. Some use it to showboat, “look at my new piece of authentic gear” (meaning to say “I’m better than you”). Some learn something new and selfishly guard it as a secret (“Do your own research”). Some twist it into justifying their own take on history (“I’m wearing this because I saw it in a photograph”). Some can use it to divide members of the group (the old us vs. them, “WE all got the NEW M41 jackets and everyone else are farbs.”) You do not want this kind of abuse of knowledge in your organization, or those who seek knowledge to those ends to be a leader.



Good leaders are lifelong learners. They see living history and personal authenticity as a journey and not an end result. More serious living history folks refer to this type of mentality as “progressive” reenacting. The leader gains knowledge not just for personal improvement but also to pass on for the betterment of the whole group. The famously cynical author, Ambrose Bierce, defined historians as “broad gauge gossips.” In other words, he describes people who learn something and just cannot keep it to themselves. The leaders of living history groups need to be unselfish learners who want to share new knowledge with us. We all want mentors. Part of the Hippocratic Oath for new doctors is to honor their teachers by passing on the information that they have learned. There should be such an oath for all leaders.

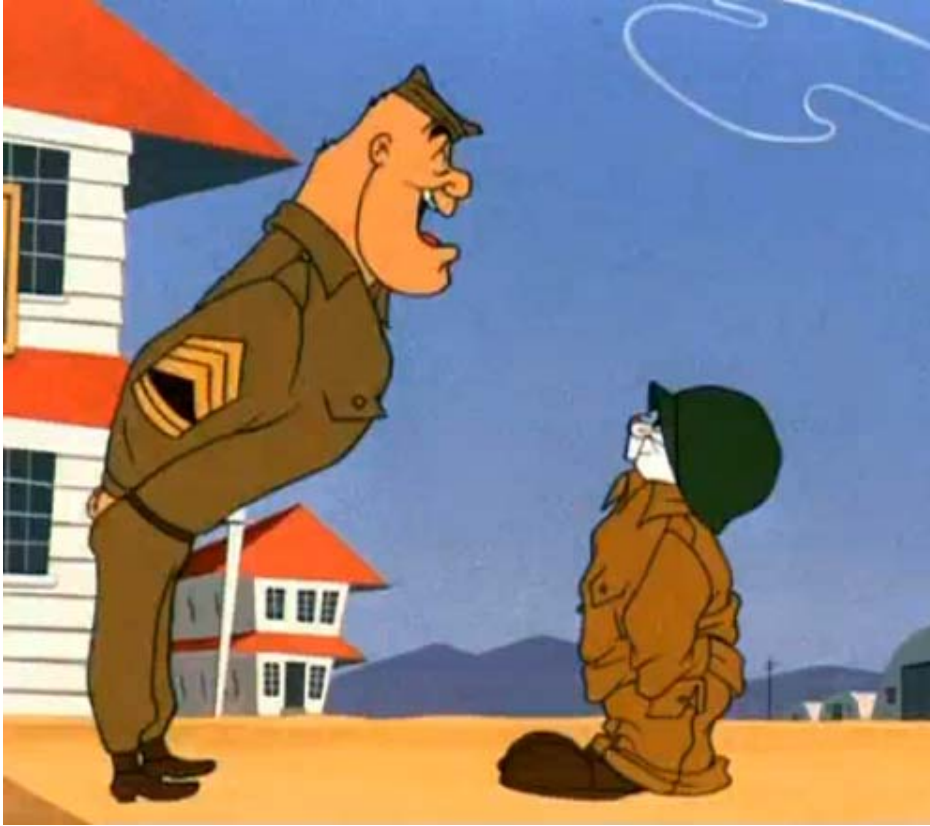
As Admiral Farragut reminds us, knowledge of *men* is integral to successful leadership. One should know those of whom he has charge. Did someone have a bad day? How is his family doing? How is his health? Has he changed his socks? Did his girlfriend just break up with him? Is he strong enough to carry the B.A.R.? Has he been trained on the 60MM mortar? Can man X be counted on to finish the job? How is our collective morale? Leaders are given authority by those whom they serve. The privates in your unit count on you to know them in order to properly take care of them. Your trust is earned through seeing to this. Thus, knowledge of the men is essential to the development and operation of the team.

Knowing your men is akin to being an effective human resource manager. You will want to be able to utilize your men according to their individual strengths. To “place the right man in the right place at the right time” is a rare skill. We demand that our leaders know us enough to take advantage of our skills and take note of our personal deficiencies without individual embarrassment. This kind of knowledge is commonly described as “with-it-ness.”

***Motivated***

“Earn your leadership every day.”

—Michael Jordan



hobby.

Positive synonyms that we discovered that belong in the motivated circle are: driven, stalwart, enthusiastic, goal-oriented, values-centered, initiative-taker, and hard working. Motivated leaders must be able to motivate others as well. It is of no surprise that thousands have made livings as motivational speakers. It is because so many people lack positive leaders in their lives who motivate them to higher and better things. Sometimes we need a motivating spirit in our lives. It is to those kinds of people to whom we are attracted.

A motivated leader is sometimes the first one up in the morning. He wants his squad to be the best in the platoon. He instills the intrinsic reward of doing a superior job. Regular army troops obey because they must; they *follow* because they want to. They obey superiors; they follow motivated *leaders*. This is all the more true in an all-volunteer hobby.

Motivated leaders foster a spirit of volunteerism. They love the hobby and the organization enough to help in any way to make it succeed. Everyone has experienced organizations where a group of five people out of a hundred do ALL the necessary work. The more leaders within an organization, the stronger it is.

As mentioned before, you wish your leaders to be motivated for the right reasons. When in doubt, if that person lacks the internal armor necessary for this, see *integrity*.

Motivation is a virtue of leadership only in persons possessing great integrity. We have seen the motivations of tyrants. Some are only motivated by the chance to *wear* rank. Some like to order people around. Some leaders seem motivated for positive gains for the organization *only* if it serves them first. There are some men who have some emotional fulfillment that they lack in their personal lives that motivates them to have power inside of this

### *Resolute*

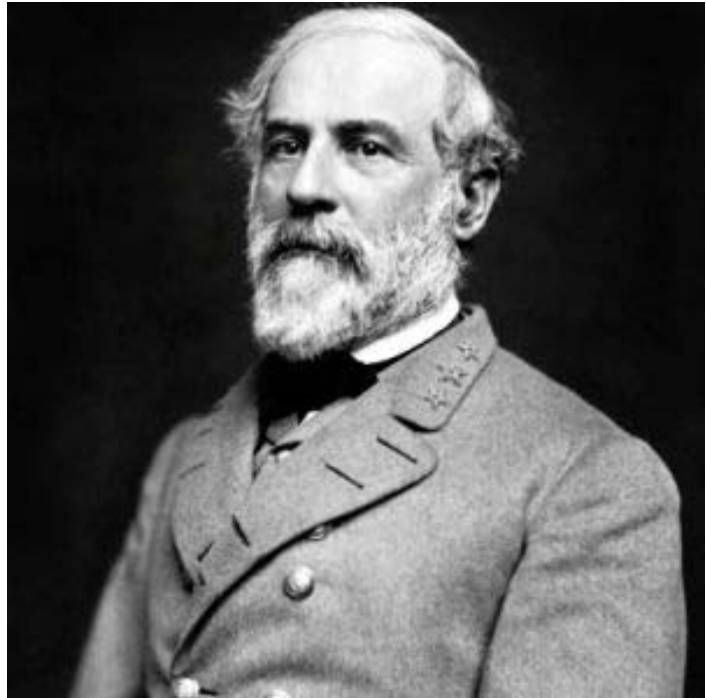
“A Leader must have superior knowledge, will power, self-confidence, initiative, and disregard of self. Any show of fear or unwillingness to share danger is fatal to leadership. On the other hand, a bold and determined leader will carry his troops with him no matter how difficult the enterprise.”

—From FM 100-5, June 1944

“Duty is the sublimest word in our language. Do your duty in all things. You cannot do more. You should never do less.”

—Robert E. Lee

Being resolute is the will to complete an objective no matter the difficulties. Other descriptors that we have added are: persistent, determined, and decisive. Resolute leaders keep promises and meet goals. Sometimes outside forces intervene. Common excuses are “I’ve got a family,” and “family comes first.” Yes, we all know that this is a hobby and that at times family issues do come up. However, ALL of us have families. Each of us sometimes has a crisis or other needs that cause us to cancel our weekend plans. But when this becomes common, it is time for a leader to recognize this in himself, and pass the torch to those who may have less personal restrictions.



Resolute leaders inspire others to work toward the common good. Resolution is a close brother to motivation. However, motivation only takes one so far. Resolution is actively being *bold*. It is tied to duty- in this case, in service to others. It makes people try to push themselves a little farther than they might have thought possible.

Resolute leaders do not give up at the first roadblock. Failing the first time should seldom be a deterrent. Many of the world’s greatest leaders have failed more times than they have succeeded. George Washington lost battles at Fort Mifflin, the Assault on Fort Mifflin, and most of the actions in the Revolutionary War. Yet, we refer to him as one of the ablest generals. His resolve *made him* THE American Revolution.

Sometimes inter-hobby politics can stymie a leader’s resolution. For example, leader “A” doesn’t share the same vision as leader “B.” In these cases, it is important to identify common goals, then be resolved to work towards them together. Suck it up, get back on track, and keep working.

Other things might affect a leader’s resolution. If a certain number of men are registered for an event and reenactor math intervenes and only half show up, the leaders understandably get discouraged. It is difficult to ignore those setbacks and carry on. One wise re-enactor once said, “At each event there is a good chance that it will be someone’s very first and someone’s very last.” No matter the numbers, you must resolve to make it the best event that you can. Work no less for ten, than one hundred.



### *Selfless*

“There are three essentials to leadership: humility, clarity and courage.”

—Fuchan Yuan

“Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership.”

—Colin Powell

One can always identify a potential leader when he begins to look after others. He thinks to pack an extra pair of socks in case someone forgets. Sometimes he plans his yearly calendar around group events and takes extra days off from work to be “on the ground” to prepare before everyone else arrives. He knows that whether or not he wears rank or not, he will still be doing the same generous things for the organization. He would be embarrassed to ask for reimbursement for gas money to haul unit gear.

This leader is generous. Not just in material things like equipment or money, but of his time. Often you never know how much a life he has outside the hobby. When you hear excuses like “I’ve got a family outside the hobby,” or “I don’t have time to do that”... you never hear these things from this kind of leader. He has time because he makes time for when he does not.

This leader has an open tent to all, and seldom groans when a subordinate comes in and says, “Uh, there is a problem in tent #3.” He is a problem solver, but also is proactive to prevent problems. This leader does not ask for rank. He is also willing to step aside and allow others to lead. Sometimes this individual is so worried about everyone else that he forgets to do certain important things like eat or visit the latrine. He is both a brother and father to the men around him. If someone is missing something, he is the person most likely to have an extra, and trust that person to take care of it- no questions asked.

This person picks up the slack lacking elsewhere in the organization. He may take on extra duties and never complain, “Sergeants aren’t supposed to do that.” This leader never puts himself into any situation where he may take from the men under his charge.

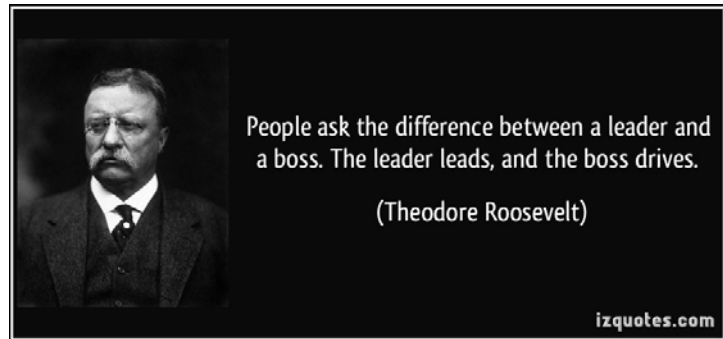


*“Joe, yestiddy ya saved my life an’ I swore I’d pay ya back. Here’s my last pair of dry socks.”*

### *Professional*

“The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it.”

—Theodore Roosevelt



The men we seek to honor and portray were professional soldiers, even if they only spent a small part of their lives in military service. We should expect no less from our leaders. If you wear rank, BE the rank. Learn as much as you can about your position and act accordingly. Your dress should be as immaculate as field and garrison impressions dictate. You should strive to “look” the part as best as one can.

Professionalism is reflected in one’s military bearing. The sharpness of his salute, the shine of his shoes, his posture while in uniform, all add to one’s air of military professionalism. There is no excuse for a leader to ever utter, “it’s only a hobby.” When one becomes a leader in his organization, he must eradicate all thoughts of minimalizing his role as being a hobbyist. George Patton is attributed to saying “if a person does not look like a soldier, then how is he supposed to act like a soldier.” Part of your hobby becomes serving others as soon as you put on those stripes.

Professionalism is reflected in how a leader interacts with others. A leader does not call out people in other organizations for lacking in their impressions. He serves as an example. If others take notice and follow, all the better. This takes a great deal of maturity and comfort in his leadership role. Only bullies like to put down others to make themselves feel better. A Professional leader needs not such self-aggrandizement.

Professionalism gives a leader credibility. If he lacks in knowledge, soldier skills, or any other attribute, acting in a professional manner may make up for these. It also drives the individual to learn what he lacks.

Individual professionalism is noticeable by everyone. In the public setting, the professional reenactors stand out. The veterans flock to them. There have been members who wear their uniform to events and get thanked for their service, even though it should be obvious that the Army hasn’t worn that uniform in seventy years. This is not because the public is ignorant, they just assume that you are a professional soldier by the way you look and carry yourself in uniform. You want leaders who gets that sort of attention.

The professional leader is a problem-solder by nature. Admiral David Farragut once said of leadership, “Hot and cold shot will, no doubt, be freely dealt to us, and there must be stout hearts and quick hands to extinguish the one and stop the holes in the other.” This is a great metaphor for solving problems and dealing with people. Some of one’s organization/unit members may be hot at times and some cold, but the professional leader must be the thermostat to be able to handle either.

### *Communicator*

“The art of communication is the language of leadership.”

—James Humes

Great leaders are natural communicators. The Army had strict standards for all media of communications. Volumes were written on how to take messages, write reports, disseminate orders, keep track of equipment, talk on a field phone, and address one another in person. These were the



“army way” of communicating in a concise and effective manner.

As re-enactors, these styles fit more into the category of “impression” than in the world of modern leadership theories. Effective communication is far more than maintaining a website or social media page (though these things do help). Communication and being an effective communicator is a two-way process of speaking and listening.

When a leader speaks to a group he should do so in a way that everyone believes he is speaking directly to them individually. This is an art of “working” the crowd. However, it helps to use words such as “we” and “us,” promoting the needs of the whole. Phrases like “the unit needs the tents to go up before personal equipment is unloaded,” is a way to emphasize the mission without seeming like you are singling a person out.

Leaders need to thoroughly know their subject before they speak. If you do, then you can speak with authority and be able to back up what you know with facts. Through the repetition of great results, the leader gains credibility.

Leaders understand that teaching and learning has nothing to do with lecturing. Learning occurs through performance, or “authentic” learning. The best learning occurs when objectives are modeled. “Show” people how to do something, not tell.

In conversation, effective leaders use dialogue instead of monologue. That means that one must be willing to hear what someone else has to say. Leaders in discussion welcome opposing views in public settings. This gains the trust of one’s subordinates to be able to be truthful with a leader without being shut down. It also keeps communication in the open and not behind closed doors.

Leaders need to be aware of the needs of others. In communicating, he needs to be authentic, empathetic, and transparent. Through this, a leader can change anger into respect and doubt into trust.

### *Personable*

“Private and public life are subject to the same rules; and truth and manliness are two qualities that will carry you through this world much better than policy, or tact, or expediency, or any other word that was ever devised to conceal or mystify a deviation from a straight line.”

—Robert E. Lee

We like leaders who are personable. But not all personable people can be good leaders. You do not want a leader who is the “class clown.” If the hobby were not in the least bit fun, we would not be doing it. If our leaders were all nasty creatures, eventually we would seek another unit, or hobby. Leaders in the hobby cannot afford to be aloof from their men. The separation between officer and soldier cannot exist as in the real army. We join a unit and make friends. Some of our friends become leaders in the organization. In many cases it becomes a challenge for your buddy, who has just put on sergeant stripes and is now responsible for you, to maintain your friendship. It takes a lot of trust.

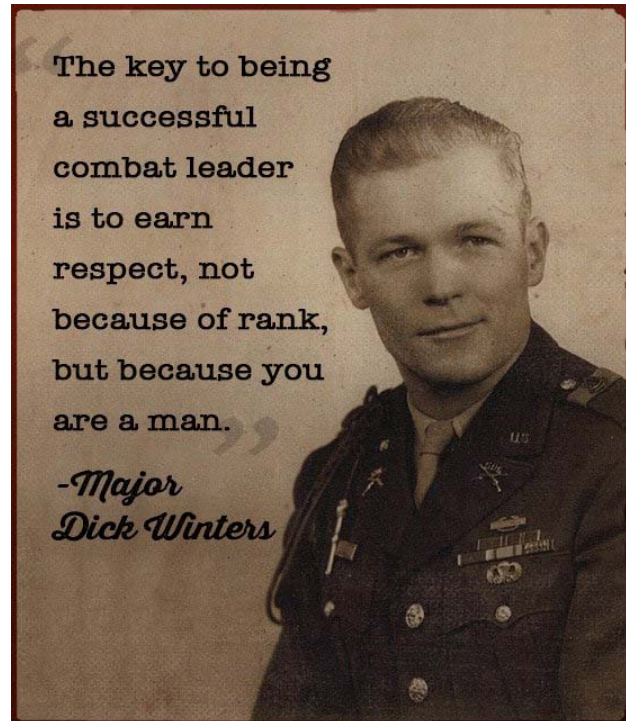
A nice man attracts others to him. Nice does not have to mean weak, although it is looked upon as a somewhat weak term. It is the reason that we chose personable rather than nice.

This leadership attribute is central to promoting camaraderie within the organization. This leader is approachable, collegial, and often has a sense of humor. The men like him because he is entertainment. But by no means should this leader become a jokester, less his credibility becomes tarnished. He must know the difference between profanity and obscenity and when not to employ them. This kind of leader will help you get through a bad weather event and help to make a crappy event enjoyable.

Outside of the unit, this leader is cordial to other reenactors and groups. He does not publically criticize because it may damage the credibility of his own organization. He restrains himself in making fun of other reenactors and discourages it within the ranks- it is just bad for morale. This leader tries to get along with everyone for the betterment of the organization and the hobby. He often acts as a moderator and keeps the peace.

### *Conclusion*

As a result of our discussions of leadership attributes in the hobby, we believe *integrity* is the rock—the core of being, a leader must have to be effective. Much like the moon orbits the earth the other attributes hover in close proximity, held in place by the gravity of integrity and the magnetism that binds each attribute to one another. Appointing a leader to our groups whom embody these attributes can make a positive difference in each group and hobby as a whole. Much like the natural forces of the universe, the forces that bind us and repel us govern our individual constellations. Without common goals, a common mission, and the forces or attributes that bind our leadership, we are failing to honor anything.



Also, like the universe, it is vast and mysterious left open to interpretation. We encourage groups to discuss and collaborate ideas on the eight traits of leadership in the re-enacting community. Sharing your thoughts will be a step toward reaching our ultimate goals: to experience the life of common soldiers, to honor those soldiers, and to educate the public of their service and sacrifice.

— *Compiled edited by Scot Buffington and Justin Jacobs*



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## THE ART OF WAR

### Marshal Maurice Comte de Saxe: Reveries on the Art of War

*Quite a few things happened long ago that influences World War II and military thought. In this issue, Robert Mosher discusses the contributions of the French Marshal de Saxe.*



In 1927, military analyst and historian Captain Basil Liddell Hart wrote his book “Great Captains Unveiled” in which he summarized the careers and military innovations of five forgotten generals. Only one of these forgotten generals actually left us with any writings of their own that we can turn to today. “Reveries on the Art of War” written by Marshal de Saxe were themselves included in the 1943 publication “Roots of Strategy” which also included the writings of Sun Tzu, Vegetius, Frederick the Great, and Napoleon’s Maxims.

“Reveries” was only published seven years after the death of the Marshal (1696-1750). The illegitimate son of Augustus III the Strong, Elector of Saxony and elected King of Poland (1697-1706 and 1709-1733), Maurice’s father sent him to serve under Prince Eugene of Savoy and learn his craft. To overcome any residual resistance in France to the acceptance of his son’s service, Augustus III also bought Maurice a title and a German regiment in French service to command (in 1719). His subsequent rise to the eventual rank of General-Marshal was all due to Maurice’s talents as a commander.

Saxe’s greatest successes came in 1745 with his conquest of Flanders during the War of the Austrian Succession. At Fontenoy, Saxe pulled 52,000 men from the siege of Tournai to respond to the arrival of The Pragmatic Army commanded by the Duke of Cumberland, son of King George II. As the English, supported by Hanoverians, pushed towards the French center, their volleys broke the first line of French troops. As retreating French troops streamed past him, King Louis XV was urged to flee but refused. Carried onto the field in a litter because of an attack of dropsy, Marshal de Saxe roused himself, mounted a horse and established his second line in position to halt the English advance including the new Irish Brigade in French service.

In a later contest with the same Duke of Cumberland, Saxe was quoted to say, “When the Duke of Cumberland has weakened his army sufficiently, I shall teach him that a general’s first duty is to provide

for its welfare.” Bringing up artillery and cavalry to support his infantry, de Saxe smashed the massive square like formation of English-Hannoverian infantry. The English army withdrew in good order aided by the stubborn withdrawal of survivors from their attack moving in small groups, returning French infantry fire and repulsing cavalry attacks. However, de Saxe saved the French army and preserved the siege of Tournai. He would go on to capture Ghent, Bruges, Oudenarde, Ostend, and Brussels that year.

From his “Reveries on the Art of War” and his correspondence and other writings, de Saxe has left us with some useful observations on a wide range of the aspects of war and warfare. He was an advocate of marching cadences, unit markings on its wagons, oblique fire on the battlefield for his direct fire guns. However, in one important instance he actually quoted a colleague, Chevalier Folard, “War is a trade for the ignorant and a science for the expert.”

### ***On Generalship***

“The man who devotes himself to war should regard it as a religious order into which he enters. He should have nothing, know no concern other than his troops, and should hold himself honored in his profession.”

“We should make war without leaving anything to chance, and in this especially consists the talent of a general.”

“No need to write long messages to a good soldier. Fight on. I am on my way.” (Field message to Marquis de Courtivon with 600 troops versus 4,000 Croats at the Siege of Egra, 1742)

“I have seen some extremely good colonels become very bad generals.”

“Drill is necessary to make the soldier steady and skillful, although it does not warrant exclusive attention.”

“Many generals believe that they have done everything as soon as they have issued orders, and they order a great deal because they find many abuses. This is a false principle; proceeding in this fashion, they will never reestablish discipline in an army in which it has been lost or weakened.”

“Once the enemy has taken flight they can be pursued with no better weapons than air-filled bladders. But if the officer you have ordered in pursuit... must attack, push, and pursue without cease.”

### ***On Combat***

“Decline the attack altogether unless you can make it with advantage.”

“The foundation of training depends on the legs and not the arms. All the secrets of maneuver and combat is in the legs, and it is to the legs that we should apply ourselves.”

“One should, once and for all, establish standard combat procedures known to the troops, as well as to the general who leads them.”

“Those who wage war in mountains should never pass through defiles without first making themselves masters of the heights.”

“When we have incurred the risk of a battle, we should know how to profit by the victory, and not merely content ourselves, according to custom, with possession of the field.”

### ***On Morale***

“The human heart is the starting point in all matters pertaining to war.”

“He (Chevalier Folard) supposes all men to be brave at all times and does not realize that the courage of the troops must be reborn daily, that nothing is so variable, and that the true skill of the general consists in know how to guarantee it.”

“I like people who eat well before they fight. It is a good sign.”

“After the organization of troops, military discipline is the first matter that presents itself. It is the soul of armies. If it is not established with wisdom and maintained with unshakeable resolution you will have no soldiers. Regiments and armies will only be contemptible armed mobs, more dangerous to their own country than to the enemy.... It has always been noted that it is with those armies in which the severest discipline is enforced that the greatest deeds are performed.”

“One can be exact and just and be loved at the same time as feared. Severity must be accompanied by kindness, but this should not have the appearance of pretense but of goodness.”

#### ***On Support/Combined Arms***

“I am persuaded that unless troops are properly supported in action, they will be defeated.”

“Every unit that is not supported is a defeated unit.”

“It is not big armies that win battles; it is the good ones.”

#### ***On Cavalry***

“Altogether, cavalry operations are exceedingly difficult, knowledge of the country is absolutely necessary, and the ability to comprehend the situation at a glance, and an audacious spirit, are everything.”

#### ***On Logistics***

“It is necessary from time to time to inspect the baggage and force the men to throw away useless gear. I have frequently done this. One can hardly imagine all the trash they can carry with them year after year. It is no exaggeration to say that I have filled twenty wagons with rubbish which I have found in the review of a single regiment.”





 **REENACTOR PRO**