

FORUM & FEATURES



THE COMPANY



DANDRIDGE M. MALONE

What is this thing we soldiers call *The Company*? It is often called a unit. And if you'll look that word up, you'll find that a unit is a one, a whole composed of parts put together, a single thing.

Now picture this "thing" on the battlefield. It is there to fight. Its sole purpose in life is to destroy enemy soldiers and to take and hold ground. It was designed that way.

It is the result of countless centuries of adjusting and adapting to the demands of thousands of battles in each of which only the fittest survived. And that thing there on the battlefield is the result of all those lessons learned, back across all those centuries. It is there on the battlefield to fight. Its standard is simple: SURVIVE. And on the battlefield, that means only one thing — WIN.

This thing can move across country, by itself, at three miles an hour. When it moves, it stretches out, like a snake, in a line a quarter of a mile long. When it rests, it curls up, facing outward, ready to fight, in a circle about 350 meters across. If it rests for very long, it begins to disappear into the earth. On the battlefield, when it's fighting, it eats about 2,000 cans

of C-rations and drinks about 500 gallons of water in a day. And it never sleeps.

When this thing attacks, its destructive power is awesome. It can come from any direction, day or night. It can hit head-on, but, usually, it won't do that. It will, instead,



send out pieces of itself in the night to sense out the weak and unprotected places, and then, just at the edge of dawn, it will strike.

It kills mostly by firing steel projectiles into the vital organs and critical

parts of its opponents. In a day of sustained combat, it can deliver almost 30,000 of these projectiles, of all shapes and sizes. Many of these projectiles explode and shatter on contact, each creating a thousand more fragments of steel that search for those vital organs.

Very seldom does this thing fight by itself. In battle, it calls its kin — other "things" that look just like it, and others that move at high speeds in steel machines, and some that fly, and some that just stand back and shoot. All of them can deliver steel into vital organs. This thing is, for certain, bad.

This thing, like you, is alive. Like you, it has muscles, called soldiers. Like you, it has a brain, called the company command post. And like you, it has, linked to that brain, a nervous system that carries the information that controls and coordinates the muscles; this is called the leadership of the unit — the captain, the lieutenant, the sergeants — linked together into a chain. How well this thing fights, and how well it can deliver steel, depends on its muscles and its nerves — and on whether both function as they are supposed to.

and, finally and mostly, it depends on how well and how much the muscles and nerves have practiced together.

In the least complex and most humble of all the kinds of fighting companies in our Army today, there are 169 men. For each of these men, there are 66 items of clothing and equipment that belong to him. There are 20 more items of clothing and equipment that the company gives to each man. And the company itself has 866 more major items of equipment and weapons that the 169 men use when the whole thing fights. That's a hell of a lot of items. And most of these items that belong to the company serve one purpose — delivering steel.

Now, if the thing is to do what it's

supposed to do on the battlefield — fight and win — then it needs to know how to use all of those weapons and items of equipment efficiently and effectively. How well it does this depends greatly on how much skill the unit has. If the unit is fully trained and ready to fight, it knows about 1,500 different kinds of individual skills. And it can combine these individual skills into 500 more packages of skill that are used by the company's squads and platoons, and by the company itself. That's 2,000 different skills. Soldiers and teams use all these skills to put all those weapons and equipment to work, to fight, to win.

All these numbers tell you how complicated that thing is on the in-

side, and why it is so deadly. And it is you, the leaders of the unit, who organize and coordinate the whole, complex, deadly thing that we soldiers call *The Company*.

DANDRIDGE M. MALONE, a retired Infantry Colonel, is a prolific writer, having published numerous articles, books, and technical reports. He holds a master's degree in social psychology from Purdue University and has completed several military schools including the Armed Forces Staff College and the U.S. Army War College. In addition to his Infantry leadership assignments, he also served in either staff or faculty assignments at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the U.S. Military Academy, and the U.S. Army War College.

Lessons in Leadership



CAPTAIN HAROLD E. RAUGH, JR.

The greatest challenge that faces today's company grade Infantry officers is that of molding their platoons and companies into cohesive, combat-ready organizations. The leadership training they receive in their pre-commissioning programs, as well as in their basic and advanced courses, does offer them a significant amount of guidance, but when they get out of the classroom they are solely responsible for putting that training into practice and improving on it.

One of the best ways an infantryman can develop his own leadership abilities and attributes is to read about and study the experiences other junior officers had in past wars.

Toward that end, I wrote to several retired senior Army officers who had served as junior officers during World War I and asked them about their leadership experiences. I believe their answers are worthy of serious consideration. Even though the techniques and weapons of warfare have changed greatly since 1918, the points these men make demonstrate clearly that the basic military element of our Army — the individual soldier — remains the same. He will be successful, but only if he is well led.

For example, Major General William O. Reeder, United States Military Academy, 1917, served in France during World War I, but by

the time his regiment was equipped for battle, the Armistice had been signed. He writes:

I venture to say that the key to success is to have the men you lead confident of you. Of course, you must know your stuff but there is something else that wiser men than I have attempted to describe and have failed. One thing I'm certain of is that you mustn't look over your shoulder to see how you are doing.

Also a 1917 graduate of West Point, Colonel Clyde H. Morgan was promoted to first lieutenant soon after graduation and within a year