

# FORUM & FEATURES



## With a Special Capital "I"

CAPTAIN HAROLD E. RAUGH, JR.

Just days before World War II ended in Europe in 1945, a British Army infantryman wrote a letter to *The Times* (of London), entitled "In Praise of Infantry." This British infantryman, Field Marshal Archibald P. Wavell, was trying to overcome what he considered a lack of respect by his countrymen for the Infantry. Field Marshal Wavell's message is as timely now as it was in 1945, if not more so.

Wavell was no newcomer to the Infantry and its way of life. The son and grandson of professional soldiers, he had graduated from the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in 1900 and the following year had been commissioned in the Black Watch Regiment.

From then until 1943, when he was appointed Viceroy of India, Wavell had gained fame as one of England's outstanding soldiers. He had served with distinction in a number of important command and staff assignments, including active service during both the Boer War and World War I, as well as in several campaigns in northern India. It was while serving as Viceroy of India that Wavell wrote "In Praise of Infantry," which appeared in the 19 April 1945 issue of *The Times*. Except for several minor omissions, here is Wavell's letter:

*My attention was lately called by a distinguished officer to the fact that, whereas in official correspondence and*

*in the Press it is the practice always to use initial capital letters in referring to other arms of the service—e.g., Royal Armoured Corps, Royal Artillery, etc.—the infantry always suffered the indignity of a small "i". My friend wished to adopt the usual method of an Englishman with a grievance and to write to The Times about it! But he proposed to do it vicariously, through me. Hence this article. I had not, I admit, noticed the small "i" myself, nor would it have worried me greatly if I had. But I do feel strongly that the Infantry arm (with a capital "I") does not receive either the respect or the treatment to which its importance and its exploits entitle it. This may possibly be understandable, though misguided, in peace; it is intolerable in war.*

*Let us be clear about three facts. First, all battles and all wars are won in the end by the infantryman. Secondly, the infantryman always bears the brunt. His casualties are heavier, he suffers greater extremes of discomfort and fatigue than the other arms. Thirdly, the art of the infantryman is less stereotyped and far harder to acquire in modern war than that of any other arm. The role of the average artilleryman, for instance, is largely routine; the setting of a fuse, the loading of a gun, even the laying of it are processes which, once learnt, are mechanical. The infantryman has to use initiative and intelligence in almost every step he moves, every action he takes on the bat-*

*tle-field. We ought therefore to put our men of best intelligence and endurance into the Infantry.*

*Yet the Infantry in peace or war receives the lowest rates of pay, the drabest uniforms, sometimes even the least promising of recruits; most important of all, it ranks lowest in the public estimation and prestige. This is all wrong and should be set right by methods more important than a capital I.*

*In all the long history of war on land the front-line fighting man, whose role is to close with the enemy and force him to flee, surrender, or be killed—the only method by which battles are ever won—has two categories only—those who fight mounted—once the Knights-at-arms, then the Cavalry, now the Royal Armoured Corps—and those who fight on their feet—the inevitable, enduring, despised, long-suffering Infantry (with a very capital I). Artillery, Engineers, R.A.S.C., and the like simply handle the weapons and equipment which Infantry have from time to time discarded, when they found that they encumbered their mobility and lessened their power to perform their primary role of closing with the enemy. The cannon, bombard, or what-not, when first introduced was an infantry weapon; when it impeded mobility it was handed over to second-line men, to support the Infantry. Similarly with other weapons and devices.*

*So that the real front-line fighters,*

mounted or dismounted, are the men who should receive such panoply and glamour as are accorded to this dreary business of war. The mounted men have always had it—prancing steeds, glittering uniforms, sabretaches, scimitars, dolmans, leopard-skins, and the like in the old days; the imposing clatter of tanks and smart black berets in these sterner days. But the infantryman who bears the danger, the dirt, and the discomfort has never enjoyed the same prestige.

But I believe that what the Infantry would appreciate more than anything is some outward and visible symbol. No one grudges the parachutist his very distinctive emblem, but the infantryman is, I will maintain, subject to greater and more continuous, though less spectacular, risk than the parachutist, and should certainly have an emblem. What it should be I must leave to others—a rampant lion, crossed bayonets, a distinctive piping?

It can surely not have escaped notice that nearly all our leaders who have distinguished themselves in this war have all been infantrymen—Field-Marshal Dill, Alexander, Montgomery, Wilson; Generals Auchinleck, O'Connor, Platt, Leese, Dempsey, and others. Last war was a very static war, but there was a fashion for cavalry generals; in this war infantry generals have shown that they can move as fast as any.

So let us always write Infantry with a specially capital "I" and think of them with the deep admiration they deserve. And let us Infantrymen wear our battle-dress, like our rue, with a difference; and throw a chest in it, for we are the men who win battles and wars.

Wavell advances a number of cogent points in his article that apply as well to our own Infantrymen today. Why doesn't he receive more pay, a higher enlistment bonus, or a higher selective reenlistment bonus? Whatever happened to the proficiency pay given to holders of the Expert Infantryman Badge, or the incentive pay proposed in the late 1970s for Infantry



noncommissioned officers serving in combat leader—or "green tab"—positions? Why don't the Infantrymen in line units (battalion and below) who habitually spend sustained periods of time in the field living in austere conditions and separated from their families receive incentive pay?

What about the standards of our Infantry recruits? Why aren't the physical and mental standards for initial entry and subsequent promotions raised—for private soldiers as well as officers?

Granted, Infantrymen are authorized to wear the blue Infantry shoulder cord on the uniform coat of their Army Green

uniform, but what distinction is there when this jacket is not worn? Why isn't there a distinctive Infantry (branch) color coding—a piping—in place of the current gold band on the shoulder boards of rank for the light green shirt, in a manner similar to that employed by the German Army? And what about the light Infantryman who almost always wears the battle dress uniform? Why isn't he authorized a "Light" Infantry tab, to be worn above his division patch like a Ranger tab; or a beret; or a special trench or commando knife he could wear on his pistol belt?

Positive answers to all of these questions will add immeasurably to the morale of each of our Infantrymen. They will also help create a more cohesive, efficient, and effective branch (and better units), and will help compensate the Infantryman for his additional privations, burdens, and responsibilities.

Wavell's laudatory praise of the Infantry—with a very special capital "I"—is as relevant today as it was four decades ago. The Infantry is destined to remain the paramount and indispensable branch of the Army. Long live the Infantry, Queen of Battle!



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# Training Management

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The Army's training system is designed to give commanders everything they need to prepare their units for com-

bat. This is basically a three-fold process that includes the basic combat training of the individual soldier, the sustainment of

combat training, and unit field exercises that simulate actual warfare. Additionally, the system provides for training doc-