

# INFANTRY LETTERS



## NIGHT CLIMB

I have read the article "Tactical Night Climb," by Lieutenant Colonels William M. Menning and Stephen R. Sands (INFANTRY, September-October 1991, pages 40-42). It is good that units such as theirs perpetuate the military mountain spirit, but I do have several questions and suggestions based upon my experience in the mountains.

I served in mountain infantry units during World War II and did reconnaissance for our company before our night assault on Riva Ridge. At the end of the war I served in several mountainous regions. As a district ranger, I trained rangers, national ski patrol, sheriff's and fire departments and rescue groups for 30 years. In the nine years since my retirement, I have continued to train these groups in search and rescue and survival. I have designed and invented mountain and cave rescue equipment (brake bars, cable winch systems and litters).

Here are some suggestions that may help mountain units:

- Have instructors use color-coded ends of rope to teach knots, using large-diameter rope and standing sideways so the training group has the same view of the knots as the instructors.
- To train knot-tying for night or day, have the troops tie knots while blindfolded, in darkness, or behind their backs.
- In training, have each trainee carry two three-foot lengths of parachute shroud in their pockets so they can practice tying knots.
- Have the soldiers double check each others' knots and harnesses for correctness and safety.
- In the instruction area, have an exhibit of anchors and litters rigged with all the correct knots. Then have all the rope and equipment available to do a mirror of the rigging for practice.

- Teach the soldiers how to tie knots with one hand. One of them may have an injured hand or may have to hang onto a cliff or belay a fall with only one hand free.

I question the use of night vision goggles by climbers. I went down to our local National Guard unit and tried them out. I found them not good for depth perception; they give one tunnel vision. I contacted my local eye surgeon about adjusting one eyepiece near and one far. He said that only about five percent of all people could handle the near-far adjustment and that the others could experience eye fatigue and other problems.

NVGs or NVG scopes could, however, be used to advantage by a well-trained climber observer across the valley from the route to help a team stay on route (using radio to the team leader).

A good oblique aerial photo of cliff sections would be handy for both the cross-valley observer and the climbers. The photos should be gridded.

Is it possible for NVG laser beams to pick up small reflective patches on the backs of the climbers' helmets? During World War II we used one-inch square reflective patches on the backs of our helmets to maintain night contact. This would also help a cross-valley observer pinpoint locations.

I hope some of this will be useful.

BOB FRAUSON  
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## KEEP TO ARMY STANDARDS

I would like to comment on the article "Informal NCO Contract," by Lieutenant Mark D. Butler and Command Sergeant Major Angus A. Gray (INFANTRY, November-

December 1991, pages 11-13). While otherwise interesting and professional, the article is disturbing because it highlights a prevalent tendency to ignore Army standards and to substitute personal opinion.

Specifically, the authors contend that the standard for success in the physical fitness portion of the noncommissioned officer evaluation report (NCO-ER) is to score 270 or better on the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). This is not correct. The proper Army standard for success is 180 points on the APFT. If a rater wants to recognize outstanding performance short of excellence, the proper thing to do is to put it down as a PT bullet on the NCO-ER.

My guess is that the authors are trying to make the point that there may be an informal agreement between the rater and the NCO to achieve 270 points. This is, of course, commendable. I am not one to argue that "the minimum is the maximum." Everyone should excel on the APFT. But honoring an informal agreement should not be confused with a formal standard for "success." By this confusion the authors have established a meaningless, non-regulation, and unenforceable standard.

They could even generate a successful NCO-ER appeal. For example, a lieutenant and an NCO might agree that the NCO will score 270 on his APFT. If he scores 250, he has not "succeeded" by the contract and "needs improvement." I suppose anyone who does not score 300 on the APFT needs improvement, but I know of no commander's inquiry that would sustain that argument.

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Hollis, New Hampshire

## HELMET SHAVING BASIN

What ever happened to ingenuity? In these days of defense cuts and "build-down," the proposal to expend funds for an 18x18-inch, two-mil, plastic bag to be inserted in the PASGT helmet and used as a "shaving basin" seems a bit much (INFANTRY, November-December 1991, page 3.)

One problem with the brief news item is the suggestion that heating water in the old "steel pot" over an open flame was ever authorized. It was done, of course, but it wasn't authorized.

The other problem is comprehending why soldiers can't carry an empty MRE bag with them to be used as a wash basin. The MRE bag is durable enough to withstand hot water. Instead of being torn into unusable pieces, it could be cut down the side or across the top. The proposed gimmick just seems wasteful and, frankly, I can't imagine those clean "users"—the Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard—springing for a share of the bill.

BOB HAMMACK  
PSG, U.S. Army Reserve  
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## MILITARY REVIEW WRITING CONTEST

The commandant of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College has announced the 1992 *Military Review* writing contest.

Entries on the topic "The U.S. Army in Joint, Combined, and Coalition Warfare" will be accepted through 1 July 1992. The author of the winning manuscript will receive a \$500 cash award, and the manuscript will be published in *Military Review* in the fall of this year. Second and third place winners will receive \$200 and \$100, respectively, and all entries will be considered for publication.

The broad topic area is intended to encourage coverage of a wide range of related issues. Subjects that would be considered appropriate include current and future roles and missions, doctrine,

historical perspectives, service relationships, recent operational lessons, and education and training. The common thread should be consideration of current and future joint, combined, and coalition warfighting capabilities. Entries will be judged for research, scholarship, and relevance to current Army needs.

Manuscripts must be original and not previously offered elsewhere for publication. They should be between 2,000 and 2,500 words and typed double-spaced. Entries must indicate clearly that they are contest entries. A writer's guide is available upon request.

Entries should be sent to *Military Review*, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Funston Hall, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-6910.

STEVEN F. RAUSCH  
COL  
Editor in Chief  
*Military Review*

## U.S. FORCES, JAPAN FORMING ASSOCIATION

A number of former service people are interested in forming an association based on our former command, United States Forces, Japan.

Anyone who is interested may contact me at 2107 Applegate Drive, Corona, CA 91720.

ROBERT E. RAYFIELD  
COL, USAF (Retired)

## LETTERS HOME BOOK PROJECT

Last May I began a project to raise money for the children of service men and women killed while serving in Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM. Specifically, I am attempting to compile a collection of letters for a book to be published entitled *Letters Home...The Persian Gulf Experience*, with all profits going to help these children.

So far, I have received about 85 letters, most of which are replies of

service personnel to senders of "To Any Serviceman" letters. These letters tell a tale of varied emotions and experiences encountered during their tour of duty. Yet they do not paint the full picture. I need more letters.

Anyone who would like to contribute items to the book should send a copy of the letter received, along with the soldier's first name, age, service branch, rank, and home state to Letters Home, P.O. Box 6929, Affton, MO 63123.

JESS TAYLOE

## FIRST DIVISION REUNION

The Society of the First Division (Big Red One) will hold its 74th Annual Reunion from 26-30 August 1992 in Chicago, Illinois. The Society is composed of soldiers who served in World War I, World War II, Vietnam, Operation DESERT STORM, and in peacetime.

For further information, please contact me at 5 Montgomery Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19118; or (215) 836-4841.

ARTHUR L. CHAITT  
Executive Director

## 21st INFANTRY REGIMENT

The 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry is looking for two members of Task Force Smith to become Honorary Colonel and Honorary Sergeant Major of the Regiment. Interested Task Force Smith members should direct questions to Company A, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, Schofield Barracks, HI 96857, or call (808) 655-0556.

In addition, the battalion is searching for former commanders of the regiment who served from September 1945 to February 1957, January 1963 to February 1974, and April 1974 to 1988. These commanders may write or call the same address and telephone number.

DARRYL W. SHARP  
2LT, U.S. Army