

INFANTRY LETTERS



EVEN HEROES ARE HUMAN

As we continue to commemorate World War II, it is important to recall the many soldiers whose courage and sacrifice made the final victory possible. The after-action reports of the Second World War have highlighted many achievements of American soldiers, and it is in the recollection of those events that we remember the courage and leadership that spelled the difference between victory and defeat. These traits are as important today as they were 50 years ago, for today's combat soldier will likely face many of the same challenges as his counterparts of the past.

While not all leaders are necessarily heroic, and some heroes may not automatically be good leaders, Colonel Cecil "Bull" Bolton was a man who combined the best qualities of both, serving his nation in combat during two wars. Originally commissioned in the Army Reserve, he earned the Medal of Honor while a member of Company E, 413th Infantry, 104th Infantry Division. On the night of 2 November 1944, his unit crossed the Mark River in Holland, came under intense enemy artillery fire, and was immediately pinned down by a pair of German machineguns whose incessant grazing fire prevented the unit from maneuvering. Lieutenant Bolton was wounded almost immediately in both legs by shell fragments.

Although painfully wounded, he directed mortar fire against the machineguns, and when this proved ineffective he led a bazooka team in search of the enemy positions. Wading the icy, chest-deep waters of a canal, he maneuvered to within 15 yards of the first of the guns and destroyed the emplacement with two hand grenades. Lieutenant Bolton then led his men through heavy enemy fire in search of the second machinegun. He quickly shot an enemy sniper who

tried to stop their advance, but this alerted the machinegun crew, who turned to engage them; Lieutenant Bolton shot the gunner while his men killed the rest of the crew.

By now his unit was receiving direct fire from an 88mm gun; again entering the canal, Bolton and his men maneuvered to a position from which they could take the gun under fire. With Lieutenant Bolton providing covering fire, the bazooka team knocked out the gun. He was again wounded while returning to friendly lines; fearing for the safety of his men, he ordered them to leave him and crawled back to his unit's position, where he collapsed. Eventually recovering from his wounds, Lieutenant Bolton went on to earn a Silver Star and a Bronze Star for bravery before the war in Europe ended. He was promoted to captain and returned to the United States, where President Harry S. Truman presented the Medal of Honor in a White House ceremony. At the conclusion of the ceremony, President Truman shook Captain Bolton's hand and said, "Captain, if I can ever do anything for you, please don't hesitate to call on me." Captain Bolton, realizing that the career prospects of a Reserve officer in a small peacetime Army were not bright, replied that he would like a Regular Army commission; the President replied, "Consider it done!"

He went on to fight in the Korean War, where he was again decorated for bravery in action. In Korea, as during World War II, he remained close to his men. His affinity for working with and taking care of troops earned him their respect and trust. Honesty—then, as now—was fundamental to leadership, and "Bull" Bolton treated his troops like men, never talking down to them, and giving them straightforward, honest answers. Whether warning them about predatory bar girls, card sharks, or the

dangers of combat, he was an effective speaker who could seize and hold the attention of his audience, communicating his message in language understandable to all.

Leading by example remains the most effective form of leadership, and Colonel Bolton continued to demonstrate this principle as commander of the 1st Battle Group, 23d Infantry, at Fort Richardson, Alaska, where I first met him. His unique down-to-earth manner and ingenuous country accent often led others to underestimate him—to their later dismay—but his courage left no room for doubt. Whether taking an armored personnel carrier downrange to demonstrate its protection from small arms and artillery fire, climbing and rappelling on sheer rock walls, or crossing glaciers and mountain streams, "Bull" was always where his troops were, urging them on by his example.

A leader must also train his unit to operate under pressure; he knew from his experience in two wars that in order to survive and win soldiers must be able to react to the unexpected and make decisions under the worst possible conditions. He called alerts at the most unexpected times—on one occasion at the conclusion of the Officers' Club New Year's party—and for periods lasting from a few hours to a week or longer. Those who were improperly prepared were not caught unprepared a second time.

I am confident that all who served with Colonel Bolton learned a great many things which they were later able to put to good use. The best advice he gave me was, "You should tell subordinates what you want them to do, but you shouldn't tell them how to do it." He reasoned correctly that a task became a personal challenge when you had to plan and execute it on your own, without detailed guidance and supervision, and

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he made sure that soldiers had the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. His philosophy was, "If you nurture initiative you can develop a platoon, company, division, or even an entire Army that just has to be a winner!"

The essential nature of leadership is not a new concept; it has always been fundamental to success in combat. Colonel Cecil H. Bolton represented two of the best attributes of the leader: courage and the ability to inspire men to accomplish the mission.

JOHN M. HELLER
COL, U.S. Army, Retired

U.S. BATTALION, NOT FRENCH

A friend sent me a copy of *INFANTRY's* March-April 1994 issue containing Major Kevin Benson's article, "Commander's Intent." While I found the piece quite interesting, there is one detail that needs correction.

The article states that the infantry battalion forming part of the task force led by Lieutenant Colonel Creighton Abrams in the World War II relief of Bastogne was "a French battalion." In fact, it was a U.S. Army unit, the 53d Armored Infantry Battalion, 4th Armored Division. Along with Abrams' own 37th Tank Battalion and the 94th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, the battalion formed Combat Command "R" of that division.

The author may have been led to this erroneous conclusion by the apparently French name of the 53d AIB's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel George Jaques. In any event, for the record, there were no French units involved in this action.

LEWIS SORLEY
Potomac, Maryland

EDITOR'S NOTE: Our thanks to Mr. Sorley for the correction. The error was not the author's but the editor's. Lewis Sorley is the author of Thunderbolt:

General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times, *from which the incident cited in the article was taken. The book was reviewed by Major General (Retired) Albert H. Smith in INFANTRY's* March-April 1993 issue, pages 49-50.

3D MARINE DIVISION AT BOUGAINVILLE

In regard to Stanley A. Frankel's article "Hell 700," in *INFANTRY's* May-June 1994 issue, page 25, I would like to point out that the 1st Marine Division never landed on Bougainville. In fact, it was the 3d Marine Division.

The article certainly does motivate me to go back and refresh my memory on the history of that campaign.

MARTIN L. STEITZ
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EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Steitz is correct; we checked the reference in Mr. Frankel's book, The 37th Infantry Division in World War II, which confirms that the 1 Marine Amphibious Corps—attack force for the invasion of Bougainville—included the 3d Marine Division, the 37th Infantry Division, and the 8th Brigade Group of the 3d New Zealand Division.

EDITORS' CORRECTION

In the article "Infantrymen in Action: D-Day Landing, 6 June 1944" (*INFANTRY*, May-June 1994, pages 19-24), an editor's note says that Major General Albert H. Smith, Jr., commanded Company L of the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, on D-Day. Actually, he commanded that company during the invasion of Sicily in July 1943. At Normandy in June 1944, he served as the battalion's executive officer.

Our apologies to General Smith.

BATTLE OF THE BULGE COMMEMORATION

The 50th Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of the Bulge will be held 15-18 December 1994 in St. Louis, Missouri.

Complete information regarding the various ceremonies is available from the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, P.O. Box 11129-P, Arlington, VA 22210-2129.

NANCY C. MONSON
Administrative Director
Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge

HIGH POWER MICROWAVE TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE

The Seventh National Conference on High Power Microwave (HPM) Technology will be held 31 October to 4 November 1994 at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California.

A free short course on HPM effects assessment will be held in connection with the conference on 30-31 October, with attendance open to any conference registrant. The security level of the material to be presented is SECRET/NOFORN.

Additional information is available from HPM Conference Registration Office, P.O. Box 2218, Suffolk, VA 23432; telephone (804) 255-0409, FAX (804) 255-0056.

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