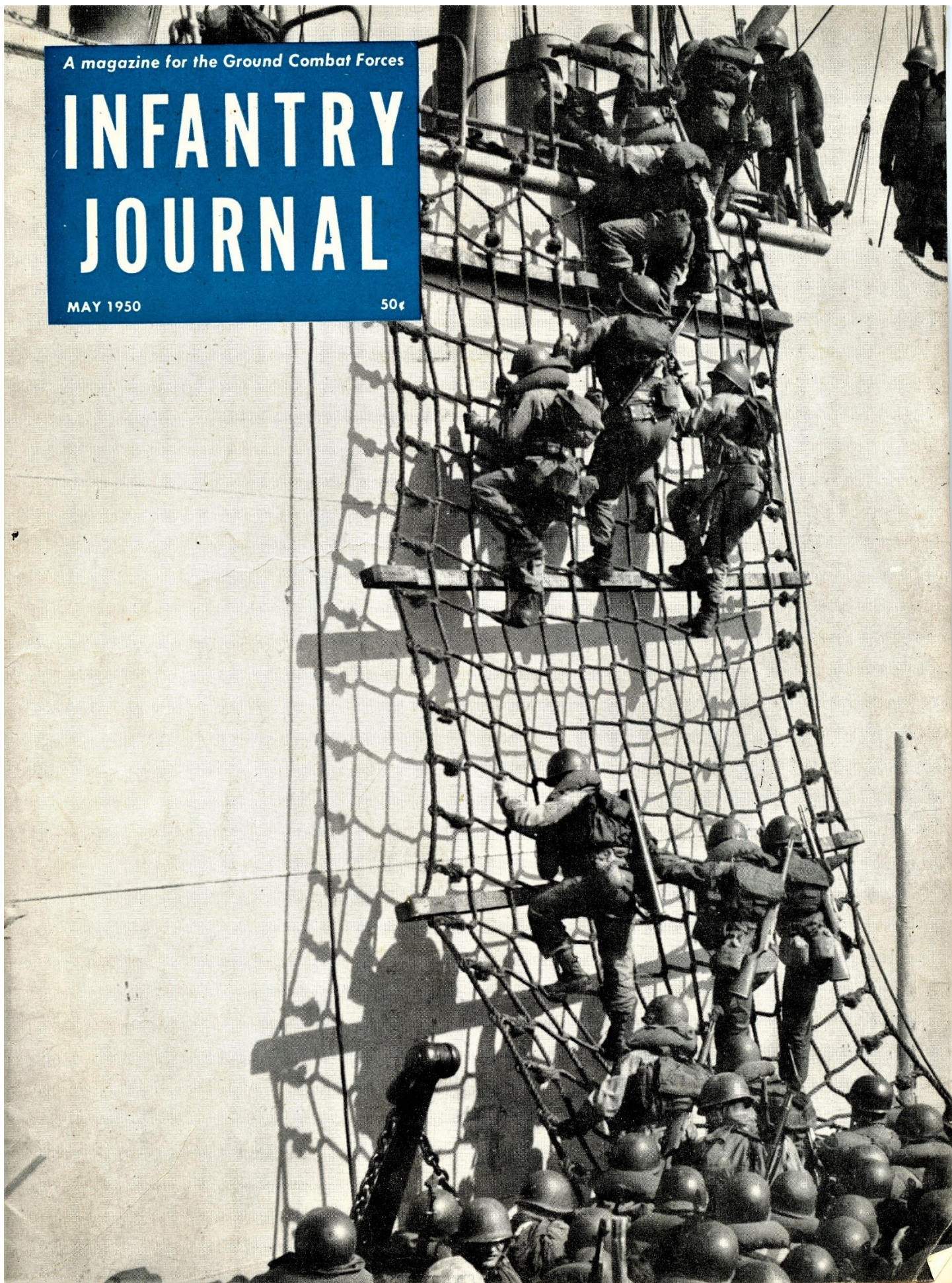


A magazine for the Ground Combat Forces

INFANTRY JOURNAL

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INFANTRY IN COMBAT

*What did we do wrong
in World War II?*

THE arguments about who won the war are becoming less violent now. A few people are now admitting that they may have been wrong occasionally. It is time for the lessons of the war to be openly discussed in our service magazines. I have opinions, based on five campaigns in the European Theater, which I have expressed positively, but they are only opinions and may be refuted. They deal primarily with the things we did wrong because it isn't necessary to correct the things we did right. After all, we won the war.

AS far as the infantry is concerned a strict adherence to the TO&E is a waste of time. One day of hard fighting and your TO&E is shot to pieces. Staff officers must be prepared to take over *any* staff position. Riflemen

T/O&E

must be light machine gunners or mortarmen, and *vice versa*. The theory of MOS replacement in battle won't work. The replacement doesn't know the situation and he is afraid. The survivors don't know the replacement; they have no confidence in strangers, officers or otherwise.

I recommend, then, that we train *all* infantrymen in *all* infantry weapons and in communications. Reduce the training hours to the bare necessities if time presses. Infantry officers particularly should be qualified in all weapons, including the operation of tanks and adjustment of artillery fire. They may have to take over any of these jobs. Higher NCOs should be just as broadly trained. Only one MOS is needed for a good infantry officer.

And infantry outfits should be left in combat without replacements until their strength falls below combat efficiency. Then they should be taken out and rebuilt.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL EDWIN B. CRABILL, Infantry, commanded the 329th Infantry Combat Team, 83d Infantry Division, in all its training and through five campaigns from Normandy to the Elbe. He is now senior instructor of the Washington (state) National Guard Instructor Group.

Colonel Edwin B. Crabill





THE infantry soldier is an excellent marksman, primarily because of the time spent teaching him to shoot at a black bull's-eye in a white target. In combat, he almost never sees *anything* to shoot at. An unqualified rifleman

MARKS- MANSHIP

may have the combat efficiency of an expert rifleman if all he has to do is hit a hedgerow, a clump of trees or the edge of a woods. As far as battle use is concerned the windage screw could be eliminated and an open sight similar to the ones used on deer rifles substituted. If an enemy is seen at all, he is probably moving and it is easier to get on a moving target with an open sight.

MARCHING fire has been well covered in the *INFANTRY JOURNAL*. It keeps the enemy down after the artillery lifts and it gives confidence to the man who is using it as he advances. It should be SOP for crossing

MARCHING FIRE

open ground against enemy positions. The light machine guns should participate. Fire superiority is essential. The Germans didn't have superiority but tried it against our positions in the Elbe River bridgehead and all were killed before they reached our line.

MOST of our fights in Europe were for villages, towns and cities. Future fighting will probably be the same. We learned this type of fighting in Europe partly by experience and partly by practicing in captured villages

TOWN FIGHTING

during lulls in the fighting. We need more training and more adequate training facilities for town fighting. Again the tank-infantry team is essential. The tanks blast out the defenders and the infantry protects the tanks from bazooka fire and occupies the captured houses.

ON first entering combat troops are too frightened to do anything but button up at dark. After they have become battlewise night attacks should be used more than day attacks. The attack on the city of Neuss on the Rhine

NIGHT OPERATIONS

was made at dusk. By daylight the city was captured. Daylight revealed twelve 88s set in concrete emplacements to sweep the flat approaches to the city. But they had been by-passed in the dark and their crews had abandoned them intact. A daylight attack against them might have been extremely costly. We should have just as much training in night attacks as in day attacks.

TACTICAL training above the platoon level should always be tank and infantry. No tanks were available to infantry divisions in World War II until after contact with the enemy. So we learned infantry cooperation the hard

TANKS & INFANTRY

way. By practicing together when not in contact with the enemy, the tank-infantry team becomes a team in fact. In the later operations of the war it worked out excellently.

RADIO codes are useful in rear installations and in static defense but the imposition of codes upon infantry under fire is useless. It is hard enough to get them to listen to messages in the clear when they are being shot

COMMU- NICATIONS

at. The best security method is to issue operation maps with important features numbered. By using the number instead of the name of a geographical feature, it is harder for the enemy, who may be listening in, to gain useful information. The coordinate system is not secure because the enemy probably has the same map.

Keeping telephone lines in operation costs a lot of casualties but it's worth the cost.

CONVOY discipline on crowded highways is ineffective because of intercolumn interference. After a number

CONVOY DISCIPLINE

of strange vehicles have cut into their column, drivers have a tendency to close up so strangers can't separate them. If the Germans had had any air force at the crossing of the Roer and the Rhine rivers, they could have made a shambles of our forces. Every road to the crossing was closed solid with vehicles head to tail. So many rear-area vehicles were there that combat troops had difficulty in reaching the line of departure on time.

Crowded roads should be controlled in the same way a train dispatcher controls trains. Each unit authorized to use the road should have a time to reach and a time to clear its initial point. A control officer with these times should be at each IP with a list of units authorized to cross. Vehicles that do not bear the unit marking should be turned off. There should be spaces between units into which specially marked vehicles such as couriers and general staff vehicles could be sandwiched. Units not making their IP time should be parked off the road until a vacant space occurs. Priority marking of vehicles should be curtailed. A lot of vehicles with messenger priority markings are just out sight-seeing.

TO get the best results from an attack it is best to feed the troops just before the attack, preferably with hot food. An attack at 1100 without feeding beforehand will usually not go far. Troops should normally be fed hot food twice a

day (at dusk and at dawn) from marmite cans. There will be some casualties among the kitchen people, but it will pay off in troop morale.

COMBAT fatigue is a highly communicable disease. It will spread rapidly through any command unless

COMBAT FATIGUE

stopped by heroic measures. A certain number of losses must be expected from this disease. In most cases no fatigue is involved. Some cases can be saved by keeping them in relatively safe places in the area until they get over it. Lectures by psychiatrists to the troops giving the cause, symptoms and treatment of combat fatigue should be forbidden. The troops will learn about it soon enough.

Length of time in the line is not always a criterion. Many officers and enlisted men went AWOL from reple-depples and hospitals to join their units in the line. The best cure for combat fatigue is winning battles.

TO the infantryman the morale of any other troops is unimportant. You can always satisfy them with their

MORALE

lot by offering to transfer them to the infantry if they don't like where they are. Anyway, few battles will be won by armies with poor infantry, no matter how good the supporting troops are. The morale of the infantry can be helped by the following:

(1) Stop giving special uniforms

(padded tanker's uniforms, for example) to troops who are never as much exposed to the weather as the infantry is.

(2) Stop giving danger pay and special leave privileges to men whose probable danger of getting killed or wounded is much less than that of the infantryman.

(3) Stop having all the leave centers so cluttered up with rear-area personnel that a decoration means practically nothing to a combat soldier. To a civilian, a war hero is a man with a lot of ribbons on his chest. He doesn't differentiate between combat and rear-area ribbons.

In all past wars the infantry has had the dirty end of the stick. It is very likely that in future wars they will take it in the customary manner. However, the intelligence level is rising and it is always possible for the time to come when the infantry will say they don't like the deal and aren't going to play. If that should happen nothing much could be done about it.

Some thought should be given to making a *corps d'élite* of the infantry so it will have some attraction in competition with the other services.

YOU don't need a magnifying glass to see the bias in favor of the infantry in this article. I intended it. It is

my belief that as long as a nation has infantrymen who will climb out of cover and move forward knowing they will probably be killed or wounded it has an army.

When the infantry won't go forward, then the country has no army.

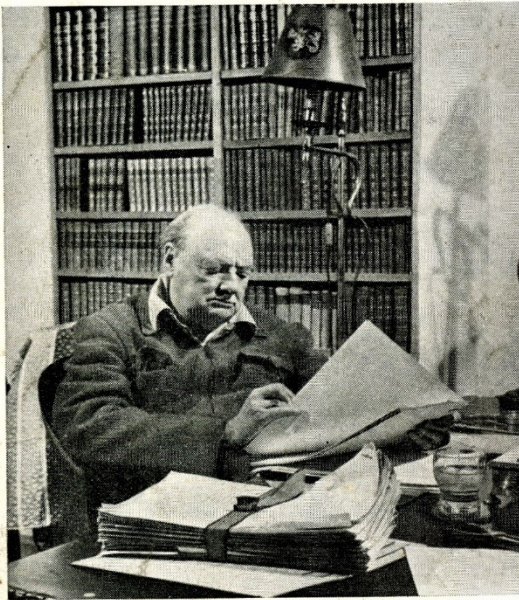
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