



A piece of *in memoriam* mail, forwarded to me the other day, was cause to reflect for a few minutes about the loss of another ancestor warrior. I felt sad, and it was kind of weird because I don't know that I have ever met General Delk Oden. Why would I, or should I, feel sadness about a man whom I had probably never met, except in the paragraphs in various books?

Delk M. Oden, Major General (Retired), Honorary Colonel of the 35th Armored Regiment, recently passed away. General Oden was the commander of the 35th Tank Battalion of the 4th Armored Division during World War Two. His battalion was the sister unit to the renowned 37th Tank Battalion, seeing virtually the same action throughout the 4AD's triumphant sweep across Western Europe. Originally a horse cavalryman, like so many of his peers, he early saw a linear relationship between horse cavalry experience and its doctrine and the doctrine being developed for the growing armored force, "Everything we really did in armor, we kind of learned basically from the horse, you might say." (*Thunderbolt*, Lewis "Bob," Sorley, p.37)

The notification came to me from another, much later commander of the 35th Tank Regiment, who learned in his generation from some of the lessons forged in battle by General Oden. This current tanker, whose professional life was directly touched by General Oden, asked that some mention be made of the passing of one of our Armored Force's truly great combat leaders. As a rule, we don't publish obituaries, promotion lists, gunnery results, and the like, but this request felt different to us, as it carried an almost imperceptible tone of urgency. You see, more and more of these great men are passing away now as their age group passes the 80-year mark and move toward 90. They take with them their tales of battle, perseverance, and bravery. And they are stories worth hearing. General Oden (then a LTC), and his peers in the 4AD, received accolades later from General Bruce Clarke when he described, "The revolution wrought by Abrams and oth-

ers in the field [Oden's battalion was the next one over] when they made up what was to become the armored forces that rolled across Europe. They had not been taught this. They invented it." (Sorley, p. 37)

We have also noticed an increase of autobiographical kinds of books from people involved in the "Big One." Some are the big-budget, Madison Avenue-promoted texts which come with book signings and free-standing, in-store display racks. Others are much more humble, like a recent book by retired Colonel Jim Moncrief, *As You Were Soldier: Recollections of a Thirty-year Veteran*. Colonel Moncrief, an ex-6th Armored Division soldier, self-published his work because he thought it so important to tell his tale. Like others who are feeling their mortality more acutely than many of us, Colonel Moncrief feels that, "These stories, likewise, might be interesting to the other Old Soldiers, as well as to the friends of Old Soldiers. And, if recorded, the tales would reflect the spirit and character, as well as the motivation, of the young men of the Forties, my generation." (Moncrief, p.7) I am certain that we can learn from their words. I am equally as certain that we should want to learn from them.

It is a sad thing for all of us when these pioneers of our vocation will be no longer available. It is inevitable, but sad nevertheless, to see those tankers and cavalrymen, to whom we all owe so much, fade away. With the passing of each one, there is a little gap that we, who remain ever vigilant in the turret, are duty-bound to step forward and fill.

I think that when Veteran's Day comes around in November this year, I will take some extra time to think about men like General Delk Oden, and I will do a little more than that. I will call a couple of them to say, thanks. On second thought, I won't wait until November. You shouldn't, either.

— TAB

By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

DENNIS J. REIMER
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff

Official:

Joel B. Hudson
JOEL B. HUDSON
Administrative Assistant to the
Secretary of the Army

03794