

Taps for an Armored Division



*The Final Veterans Reunion
of the 6th Armored Division*

by **George F. Hofmann, Ph.D.**

Veterans of the 6th Armored Division gather for their final reunion in Louisville September 12-16. On the 14th, the Association will make its final pilgrimage to Fort Knox, where the division was activated in 1942. Twenty-nine months and twelve days later, the division was committed to combat in Normandy, and except for a period of less than two weeks, the 6th AD was continuously in combat for nine and half months in the European Theater until the surrender of Germany. By that time, the "Super Sixth" had fought in five major campaigns in Western Europe, and had sustained 1,274 killed in action and 10,842 casualty losses.

For the majority of the war, the 6th AD served under Lieutenant General

George S. Patton, who considered the 6th AD and its commander, Major General Robert W. Grow, one of his most dependable leaders and divisions. Grow had been one of the pioneers in the mechanization of the U.S. Cavalry, having served in the 1930s as the S3 under Colonels Daniel Van Voorhis and Adna R. Chaffee, Jr., the Father of the Armor Force. Later, during the early days of the Armored Force, Grow served under Patton. The division inherited his philosophy and consequently established an impressive record of mobile warfighting. Unlike most other armored divisions, the 6th routinely reconfigured its combined arms organization of Combat Commands, depending upon the mission.

Grow's vision of the division as a brotherhood carried over into the post-war period. In 1947, the division association was founded at Fort Knox by Colonel (later Chief of Armor and Lieutenant General) George W. Read, Jr., and a year later the first reunion was held in Louisville. That same year, Gammon Field House at Fort Knox was dedicated to SSG Archer T. Gammon of the 6th AD, a recipient of the Medal of Honor for his

courageous action near Bastogne on January 11, 1945.

In addition, the Association had been a major contributor and supporter of the Patton Museum of Cavalry and Armor. Ed Reed, president of the Association, has served on the Museum's Cavalry-Armor Foundation since 1980.

The Association was also a major supporter of armor history. Its World War II military history, *The Super Sixth: A History of the 6th Armored Division in World War II and Its Post-war Association*, was published in 1975 by the association, and in 1987, *ARMOR Magazine* published General Grow's "*Ten Lean Years: From the Mechanized Force (1930) to the Armored Force (1940)*," an excellent account of the 6th AD commander's personal experience of the Cavalry's decline and the creation of the Armored Force. Four years ago, the Association also provided a major start-up grant for *Camp Colt to Desert Storm: A History of U.S. Armored Forces*, edited by George F. Hofmann and General Donn A. Starry and published late in 1999 by the University Press of Kentucky.