



## Saddle Up... Tonight We Ride

*"The test of a good religion is whether you can joke about it." — G.K. Chesterton*

Chesterton supplies an excellent touchstone, a telling one. An institution, organization, or person that cannot tolerate humor, or lacks a sense of humor, is often revealed as insecure or unsure. For the most part, reader comments on Rex Awesome's "just plain stupid things" in the last issue were favorable. Many readers identified with one or two items from Rex's list and a couple suggested additional items. But a select few took umbrage; one stated that a professional journal is no place for humor. I disagree. There is a place for humor in a professional journal, and when you look further into the pages of this issue you'll find we are blessed with some great examples via "Murphy's Laws of Armor" and the accompanying cartoons by SFC Mark Baker.

As my ride nears completion, with both the Army and the magazine, it's appropriate to share some thoughts on the future of this 114-year-old journal and the balance that must be maintained to ensure its survival. Three forces battle for *ARMOR's* soul: the editorial staff, senior leadership, and readers and contributors. For the magazine to succeed and accomplish its mission, "Providing the Chief of Armor with a forum to communicate with the mounted force and provide that force with a professional journal to discuss all manner of issues concerning mounted war fighting," a delicate balance must be achieved and maintained between these three interest groups. Each group of these stockholders endeavors to pull the journal in their direction. As long as the groups exert roughly the same amount of force in opposing directions, the ship sails smoothly; however, if one force pulls too hard or ceases to pull, the ship's course is altered, perhaps fatally. Thus one should discover material in every issue that represents or challenges each group's agenda or viewpoint. Input to the journal via letters, articles, and reviews should represent opposing viewpoints and originate from a variety of sources.

*"The word, even the most contradictory word, preserves contact — it is silence which isolates." — Thomas Mann.* Some question the need for a professional dialogue or debate; why foster or facilitate divergent views, they ask? *ARMOR's* *raison d'être* is clearly stated: "...not to reinforce official positions, or to act as a command information conduit, but to surface controversy and debate among professionals in the force." Debate and discussion are hallmarks of the mounted force's evolution. Failure to engage in a professional discussion impacts the branch's ability to evolve and could result in a stagnant force relegated to the sidelines. Ours is a history of evolution and change, change that reflects the ever-changing nature of warfare and technology. True, this debate and transformation has often been painful, producing rancor, but certainly the end result warrants the pain and effort expended.

No leader relishes having his agenda criticized, especially in an institution like the Army, and certainly, some of the criticism will be off the mark. But if the leader is thin-skinned and prone to squelch discussion, he loses the value of those points that *are* valid. Discussion dries up; stagnation sets in, and in the minds of the led, the most important deadline becomes the leader's ETS. We have been fortunate, most of the time, in having a free hand to publish controversial points of view. In the rare case, or cases, when a viewpoint has been muzzled or suppressed, both readers and leaders have suffered. In one case a few years ago, a particularly visible controversy about an *ARMOR* article blew up into a censorship flap. In the year that followed, *ARMOR* submissions dropped from 150 articles a year to about 100, and one can infer that the submissions we got that year were probably not the most opinionated or controversial. We all took casualties in that fight.

So let's keep our minds open and relish the opportunity the Army journals offer. You owe us, as professionals, the value of your opinions. We owe you a hearing.

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