**Adna R. Chaffee, Jr. 1906**



**Cullum No. 4483 • Aug 22, 1941 • Died in Massachusetts**



*Adna Romanza Chaffee* was born to Captain A. R. Chaffee and Anna Frances Rockwell Chaffee on September 23, 1884, at Junction City, Kansas. He died at Phillips House, Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, August 22, 1941, aged 56 years. He was buried in the Arlington National Cemetery in the presence of his many friends and coworkers of the Army, and over his grave were scattered floral tributes of admirers and friends from every part of our country.

He is survived by his wife, Ethel Warren Huff; his son, Adna Romanza Chaffee, III; and by his two sisters, Mrs. Alcott Farrar Elwell of Massachusetts and Mrs. George Hamilton of California.

Of those almost completed fifty-seven years, I desire to record for the benefit of those who shared a part of his life or those whose lives fell in the areas and times he influenced, some of the scenes and thoughts that fill my memory or have been collected out of the memories of his admiring classmates.

Adna's father was appointed Chief of Staff just after our plebedom was over. Our interest in him was great, and we eagerly drank in tales of Captain Chaffee of the Red River Country; of Major Chaffee, nemesis of Wyoming Indians; of General Chaffee at El Caney, at San Juan, and at the far off capture of Peking. The name of Chaffee was one to conjure with.

Adna himself, however, only once in a great while—when the distinguished father had paid us a visit, or when we lounged together to speculate on things to come—would loosen up a bit and tell us of his father's history and of his own wonderful boyhood. We heard tales of the Kaw Valley; of Fort Riley, the Seventh Cavalry and “Garry Owen;" of howling coyotes; of Indians in council and on the trail. Our young minds were thrilled by these "real” experiences and desires for the great and mysterious West were engendered.

To us unbroken mavericks, from all corners of the nation, most of whom had never even walked in a parade, Adna’s silent, confident air and his frequent demonstrations of military perfection were astounding. Until we learned that Beast Barracks was devised to reduce all to one common denominator, we could not understand why our yearling corporals were so hard on him. His superior qualifications, however, he contributed unsparingly to help us over the hard bumps.

Here there is a great temptation to tell the many adventures that we shared in barracks and in camp; to expose the mischief undertaken on our trips to the Roosevelt inauguration and to the St. Louis World’s Fair. However, suffice it to say that Adna shared the fun and the sufferings with the rest of us.

Adna was a good baseball player, fair with foil or broadsword; he was not a “walrus” in spite of his long residence along the shallow western rivers. But in the riding hall he really excelled. He had been a horseman from childhood and never did he lose interest in the many and varied phases of horsemanship. It was only natural that he should become a corporal, a sergeant, a lieutenant; it was an achievement, however, in the mischievous class of 1906, to graduate with chevrons in place. Adna achieved it and, withal, graduated number thirty-one in our class of seventy-eight members.

Olmstead, Henderson, Williford, and I were on hand at Forth Ethan Allen to greet Adna when he arrived with his regiment. He had joined the 15th Cavalry while it was enroute to its home station returning from maneuvers. We were not long together; but, while we were, we explored everything within horse radius of our post and were initiated fully into the mysteries of regimental life. In October, the 15th Cavalry, set out for the Pacification of Cuba. With it went Adna and Dawson Olmstead. Soon I was off for the Mounted Service School at Fort Riley; and, in a few months my battery was enroute to the Philippines.

Adna was in Cuba hardly a year, but long enough to view the battlefields where his father had brought honor to the Chaffee name only eight years before. The following autumn, Adna became a student himself at the Mounted Service School and graduated with great credit with the Class of 1908. Because of his superior horsemanship, Fort Myer was his next station. He commanded the War College Detachment for a while; went off to London with the International Horse Show Team; and, finally, in 1911, was detailed to Saumur to attend the then supreme French school of horsemanship. He returned to Fort Riley to teach in the Mounted Service School during the school year 1912-1913.

January, 1914, found Adna with the 7th Cavalry on duty at Camp William McKinley, P. I. There he stayed through the outbreak of World War I until March, 1916. Returning to the United States, he stopped over at Honolulu, where I and many other classmates met him and staged a happy reunion. He left us under orders to the Tactical Department at West Point, orders which at that time placed him as one of the elite of the Army's horsemen.

In 1917, Adna began his tactical career. Leaving West Point, he was assigned to the 81st Division, Camp Jackson, South Carolina, as Adjutant and Acting Chief of Staff. In February, 1918, he sailed for France with the troops he had assisted in training. In France, he served as an instructor and Assistant G-3 of the General Staff College of the A.E.F. until August, 1919, when he participated in the Oise-Aine and the Meuse-Argonne Offensives and in the final occupation of Germany.

He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal with the following citation:

*At the Army General Staff College, he displayed military attainments of a high order, contributing efficiently to the training of a large number of officers.*

*He performed tasks of great difficulty with marked distinction as G-3 of the 81st Division and later of the 7th Corps.*

*Later, as Chief of the Third Section, 3rd Corps, General Staff, he acted with sound judgment and wide comprehension of existing conditions in the discharge of grave responsibilities connected with his office during the closing days of the Meuse-Argonne offensive, handling perplexing problems with keen energy and wise discernment.*

In 1919, upon demobilization of the National Army, Colonel Chaffee and many others reverted to the rank held prior to hostilities. Hence, as a captain of Cavalry, Adna taught at Fort Leavenworth the principles of leadership for divisions and corps until 1920.

Then, in rapid succession he became G-2 of the Fourth Corps Area; G-3 of the Cavalry Division at Fort Bliss; student at the War College; commanding officer at Fort Myer until June, 1927. During these brief postwar years, Adna had been on staff, student, and troop duty—duty which collectively formulated his first ideas of the need of and possibilities for more and more machine and fire power in the army of an industrial nation like ours.

When I came home from London, in 1927, with a head full of data on tanks and armored forces, I found Adna had just taken over the reins in the G-3 office in the old State, War and Navy Building. He pumped out all I had and took the names of Ordnance officers who might help him with further studies of armored mechanical war tools. He loaded me with a terrible list of things he wanted to know and expected me to find out for him when I returned to London. I did the best I could for him. Through his efforts that first attempt at armored force organization was made at Fort Eustis a little later and, in 1931, he went there himself to learn more at close hand. The answer was certainly not at Fort Eustis. That year he went to Fort Knox, where terrain and facilities could be had for his newly formed ideas of warfare. As Commander and Executive of the First Cavalry (mechanized) and as Post Executive and Executive, 7th Cavalry Brigade until midsummer, 1934, he shaped and reshaped from maneuver to maneuver, and with improving tools, one form after another of army mechanized units for the maximum use of protected fire power in war.

In 1934, as Chief of the Budget and Legislative Branch in the office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, he spared no pains to provide funds essential to changing our slow old army into the fast, hard-striking armored-motorized army that seemed to him so superior. In 1938, he was placed in command of the reorganized 7th Cavalry Brigade and of the post of Fort Knox, Kentucky, as well as of the Kentucky C.C.C. District. Delegating his duties in post administration and C. C. C. matters to competent staff officers, he concentrated his energies toward making his Cavalry Brigade into the First Armored Corps. He then established and was placed in command of the Armored Force, the newest and most interesting tactical command in the Army.

The constant strain of teaching men new things; of coordinating the innumerable details necessary to maintain his new weapon; of developing and testing new tactics fitted to the unlimited possibilities of an armored force was hard on him. Many of his worries could not be shared. The horse cavalry which had reared him had to be convinced; his friends of old cavalry days never failed to accuse him of back-sliding and betraying them; he, himself, had many qualms about turning away from old tradition. But the demands of the day were too insistent. Adna realized his duty keenly and hewed to the line of progress. In the end, he received from his brothers-in-arms and from his military superiors the proper recognition and reward.

When the Armored Force became a brilliant reality, an Oak Leaf Cluster was added to his Distinguished Service Medal with the following citation:

*For exceptionally meritorious and distinguished service in a position of great responsibility.*

*General Chaffee displayed outstanding foresight, judgment and leadership in organizing and commanding the Armored Force of the Army.*

*His thorough tactical and technical knowledge of mechanized warfare had made important contributions to the increased mechanization of the Country's Armed Forces and to the National Defense.*

On the hills of Arkansas, Camp Chaffee rises to perpetuate his memory and to serve as one of the homes of that new army he was so anxious to serve and lead.

He was made a brigadier general in November, 1938; a major general, (temporary) in September, 1940; and a major general in August, 1941. The last promotion came almost too late. The long effort, always sustained at high pitch had begun to affect Adna's health in 1939 and 1940. He fought hard to ward off attacks of illness, but he never gave nature time to heal the wounds incurred in his battle for progress. As soon as strength began to return, he became restless and eager to work. Each time he returned to duty, he came back to his sick bed more damaged than before. At last, his worn body could no longer hold out under the strain; he sank into everlasting sleep.

However, none of his efforts and none of his dreams have been lost. His assistants were attentive listeners, and his plans and directions are still guiding them as the Armored Force develops into one of the great arms of the United States Service.

To us, his classmates of 1906, his stern military visage, reddened by the sun and wind of his beloved West, only served to hide a genial, loving nature, a delicious sense of humor, and a deep affection for the Army, the Academy, and the Class. Perhaps he was a great soldier, a great leader of men, a great thinker in the unexplored fields of military tactics and mechanization; perhaps he was destined to be a great Army Commander in a larger and more complicated army than his distinguished father ever saw; perhaps he was a great teacher and exponent of new doctrines and methods of warfare. Others have said so, and I believe them. He was recommended for the rank of lieutenant general but died before such rank could be conferred. But to me, his friend of barracks and camp; his co-worker in the long years of army effort to awaken this sleeping giant of a nation; his confidant in days of difficulty and hard struggle; he was just a classmate of old West Point. No stars, no medals, no high offices came between us when we sat down together. Ours were bonds of fellowship and fraternity, bonds that were forged years ago in close communion along the shady walks of our beloved alma mater.

At Fort Riley, Kansas, on December 15, 1908, Ethel Warren Huff joined him as coworker and loving wife. She has been with him in all his struggles, his victories, and his honors. She was with him in Boston to add comfort and help in the last days of his illness, and she remains a splendid witness of his grand and successful life.

To them was born a fine, happy son, Adna Romanza Chaffee, III; and he, too, has shared the splendid traditions of the Chaffee name, the trials and triumphs of his father and mother. He also heard his father's earthly farewell and remains as another witness whose testimony adds daily to the genius and devotion of his beloved father.

The epitaph that the Army he served will select for him out of the brilliant writings of the past, is this;

*If you seek his monument,*

*Look about you.*

For where the Armored Force marches on any part of this war-torn planet, you will find the spirit and also the revered memory of Adna Romanza Chaffee.

*—Charles G. Mettler, Class of 1906*