



The country and the Army lost one of its last surviving Old Regulars and Old China Hands when CW4, retired, Thomas W. Mason passed away at the age of 97 on 4 September 2009. At the time of his death he was residing at Countryside Adult Care Home in Eddyville, Oregon.

Tom was born on 13 September 1911 in Philomath, Oregon, the son of Pearl Kitson Mason and Charles Wesley Mason, and grandson of Thomas Diehl Mason whose namesake he was. His first job as a boy was as a jeweler's assistant, cleaning watches and delivering items to customers. Later he was a field hand and lumberman as a boy and young man in the 1920s before enlisting in the Army in 1931. After an initial 3 year enlistment with the 9th Field Artillery at Fort Lewis, Washington, he re-enlisted for the 15th Infantry Regiment in Tientsin, China, where he served as driver for the regimental commander for two years.

He returned to the United States in 1936 and served with the 4th Infantry at Fort Missoula, Montana until 1938. After a short tour with the Army Air Corps in San Francisco he subsequently served with the 4th Coastal Artillery in the Panama Canal Zone until 1939. During WWII he served with the Western Defense Command in San Francisco and with the 18th Coastal Artillery in the Harbor Defenses of the Columbia and had been serving with the rank of Sergeant First Class when he received his warrant as Warrant Officer on 12 November 1942. After WWII he served with the Army of Occupation in Japan 1946 to 1948. From 1948 to 1950 he served with the 14th Infantry at Fort Carson, Colorado. He joined the 3rd Infantry Division after it arrived in Korea in 1950 and served as the Assistant Division Transportation Officer until late 1951, having played an important role in the evacuation operations at the port of Hungnam in December 1950 for which he received the Bronze Star. He finished his Army career at Fort Benning, Georgia retiring in 1954 with 23 years service in the Regular Army. Upon his retirement he returned to Oregon where he was a stump farmer and raised livestock. He also served as a mail delivery man.

Tom was preceded in death by his wife of 41 years, Frances, in 1983. They were the first couple married in the new post chapel of Fort Stephens,

Harbor Defenses of the Columbia, in 1942. They had no children. Tom outlived all of his family but one nephew and all of his old friends and Army buddies but one who is living in a home in California, but he leaves behind many younger admirers he touched through his membership in the 15th Infantry Association and the Society of the 3rd Infantry Division. Tom was a generous man who endowed scholarships for soldiers' family members through the Society of the 3rd Infantry Division and made gifts to many other charities throughout Oregon.

He was a wise as his 97 years, the School of Hard Knocks, and the United States Army could make him, and he will be sorely missed by those who knew him. He considered himself a proud mossback, his family having arrived in Oregon in the middle in the 1850s. Can Do, Tom, and Rock of the Marne!