

Notes 9N, Copy 2

Gen. Omar N. Bradley

Pentagon

May 27, 1957

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Interview with Gen. Bradley, the Pentagon, Wash., D.C., May 27, 1957.

1st side

Interview did not record so Mr. Pogue summarized what Gen. Bradley had told him about Gen. Marshall's service at Ft Benning. He continued by further summary as follows:

Gen. Marshall realized that schools like Benning were an important part of army service and especially important to later war time use in regard to tactics, etc. Gen. Marshall did make changes in instruction at Benning. However, Gen. Marshall had earlier made important contributions to tactics and training as Assistant or Aide to Pershing. He was called Aide but he was more or less an assistant. He set up schools of instruction and favored simplification of teaching. He abolished the close order drill - it was valuable as a morale booster but had little other merit. Gen. Bradley stated he was aware of Gen. Marshall's reputation long before the Benning days - he had heard of his service in the Philippine Islands, that he was the only Lt. at Leavenworth and his work in World War I. In changing the Schools of Instruction, he had made important changes to improve. This was further carried out at Benning when he worked on simplification of orders and tactics so that junior officers and noncoms could understand them and carry them out without need of a high ranking officer to interpret them.

This system was different from the Russians who had to listen to the political commissars. As for the Germans although their military system was extremely rigid, the junior officers and noncoms had considerable power and were able to carry out a great deal on their own initiative. The British copied the U.S. school of infantry which they did not start until 1942. Their idea of the duties of the various levels of rank were that the noncoms were for training and the officers to lead men into battle show them how to die- if need be.

The U.S. theory is different - wanted to show men how to fight to live. Gen. Bradley answered in the affirmative when Dr. Pogue asked him if this was not the Marshall-Eisenhower-Bradley line of approach - reduce casualties in using artillery to keep down casualties. The British system is take hold sooner and goes into battle earlier but had big casualties. Gen. Bradley said he never liked commanders who bragged about their casualties. Although Patton appeared to be a man of "blood and guts", he really was a very sentimental man and tried to save his men as did not most American commanders.

There followed a brief discussion of Gen. Patton and his battle philosophy.

This led to some remark on men breaking in battle. Gen. Bradley recalled case when he was acting commander for Eisenhower of a man who had been recommended for a Congressional Medal of Honor but had had a court martial. The JAG found it was a technicality and he was given the Medal. The man had been brave but broke.

Dr. Pogue reviews briefly some of Gen. Bradley's assignments - twice at Benning, as ACS in Washington and commander of 28th division.

In discussing Pvt Slovik case, Dr Pogue asked Gen. Bradley if he had anything to do with it and he said that such cases usually went to theater commander but if he had, he probably would have favored an execution, as the man got the sentence and was the only man executed for misbehavior in presence of enemy. Gen. Bradley said he had no sympathy with those who deserted or ran away from the ship and then after a court martial, were given a light or even a heavy sentence but lived on, while the man who was brave was shot and died. He thought that hanging was one way to hold down desertions.

(In recording) Gen. Bradley told how he and Hanson put on pocket mikes and walked around discussing the situation and examining it and then they gave a narrative on what they had seen in front of a map... all of this being recorded.

Gen. Bradley said he wrote down everything bad and good about Gen. Patton the because of the controversial nature of the man. In this way, he had a thorough picture of the man. He thought perhaps he should destroy this record. He was aware of the flamboyance and color of the man and the fact he was misunderstood.

END OF DR. POGUE' S SUMMARY.

BREAK IN RECORDING BEFORE BEGINNING OF GEN. BRADLEY'S INTERVIEW

Gen. Bradley compares attitude of enlisted toward generals in World War I and II - more spirit of friendliness in World War II. Soldier in WW I said he would have walked a mile so as not to run into Gen. Pershing.

A summary of Gen. Patton and his discipline when he took over as Corps Commander from Fredendall in Tunisia when things were at a low ebb of esprit.

Discusses southern Tunisian campaign. Tells about National Guard division which was to be relieved but which Gen. Bradley urged Gen. Marshall to leave with him and that he would see that they take first objective in their next battle which they did.

Tells about being transferred from 82d Division to 28th Division and of the problems he had to met and how he solved them.

Discussion of division commanders. Bradley says Martin was a good commander and a good governor. The fallacies of the National Guard system whereby the commander of a division could be mixed up in politics at home.

Gen. Bradley tells about being ordered as a corps commander. Gen. Marshall had vacancies in these jobs and Bradley said he could have assigned him sooner but Gen. Marshall wanted him to stay with his division. Finally the assignment came at the same time he was going to Africa. He received a telegram from Gen. Marshall on his birthday which said "It is very fitting that your birthday comes on the eve of your being assigned as a Corps Commander" My birthday was on 12 February and by Tuesday of the next week, I had a phone call about orders - in fact

two sets of orders - one to 5th Corps in Texas and the other to Africa. The Corps orders were superseded by the overseas orders, however.

Bradley discusses his assignment as "eyes and ears" for Eisenhower going around and finding out what was wrong and the cause - whether it was weakness in equipment or training or that. He talked to sergeants and privates. Afterwards, he was made Deputy Corps Commander to Patton and held the other job as well until Bull was assigned to it. When he took command of the Corps, it was not intended that it would go to Italy but Patton asked for it instead of another. Then, when Bradley went to the First Army, he took 25 key personnel with him, officers and enlisted.

In regard to his selection as Army commander, Dr. Pogue asked him if it was Gen. Marshall as well as Gen. Eisenhower who wanted him. Gen. Marshall asked Gen. Eisenhower whether Bradley could be made available for 1st Army job but it was Eisenhower who firmed up the selection of Bradley as Army Group Commander. I had been asked to organize it but did not know that I would command it. Thought Devers would be selected.

Discussion of concept of how the Army was run - Eisenhower, Marshall and Bradley had the same idea in contrast to Patton and his love of publicity. Bradley gives analysis of Simpson and Hodges as Commanders and how best to utilize various personalities to the best advantage.

Bradley brought up that First Army staff was hard to handle as they thought they had more experience than the 12th Army Group. He decided to leave most of First Army staff there and make up different staff for the group. It would have been difficult to move the whole Army staff to the Army group.

Mention is made of some of the fine officers with whom Bradley worked: McNamara as quartermaster, now Quartermaster General; Medaris as ordnance officer; Eddie Hart as artillery officer; Bill Kean, best Chief of Staff - ruled his staff with iron hand; and Tubby Tasm.

In talking about the Ardennes offensive, Bradley said he thought it shortened the war by six months and that the Germans knew the attack had failed on the second day. Their units were not-worth a cent after that.

Dr. Pogue asks about some myths which have grown up, specifically about "pulling the chestnuts out of the fire" about Montgomery and his theories of what should have been done. They discuss Montgomery's part in the Ardennes -brought in only 1 brigade. Bradley wanted him to counterattack. At Antwerp, he was overly ambitious and paid for it. He could have cleaned up the peninsula long before he did. There was difference of opinion on how much help Monty needed. Monty's mistake was going off on that air drop. I disagreed on this. I saw him a few days before and he never mentioned it. Monty thought he could get a crossing there and Eisenhower consented. It was unusual for Monty to do anything daring.

In regard to changes made at Benning in regard to combat orders. The idea was to issue combat orders in form which would permit as much initiative as possible to the next lower commander instead of writing out in detail what he was supposed to do. Ex: When I took over command in

Africa my Corps order consisted of about 1/2 page or 2/3 page. The Corps commander on my right had one of 10 or 12 pages single spaced outlining in great detail what each unit had to do at H-hour, etc. The British Corps Commander when he got a copy of my order, he thought it was a terrible order and he said that he was afraid Bradley would not make a good commander because he does not issue a good order. As it was, I did not have to change my order for three or four days while the other commander had to issue another one very shortly. I left details up to the division commander and they in turn left it to the regimental commander, on down the line. This is a much better system than trying to put everything in at the higher echelon.

The start on this new system had been made when Marshall was in Washington in 1919-20 before he went to Benning.

What Marshall tried to do at Benning was to try to simplify our methods and tactics. Probably one of the most lasting things under Gen Marshall was the method of instruction. If you go to Benning, you will be very proud of the instruction given by every officer and every non-commissioned officer

Those methods of instruction started under Gen. Marshall as Asst. Comdt. For instance, we were not allowed to use even notes in our conferences. I would get up and give an hour's lecture on tactics - I not only did not have a written manuscript, I did not even have notes. There was one exception to that - when we were out in the field and we were a conference in connection with a demonstration, we allowed our instructors to have enough notes to time it with the man down yonder 1000 yards. You might have to have a reminder that at 10:11 so and so was going to happen and you had to be sure you led up to it because it was going to here happen down there, there was no way to control it - if you got a minute behind or a minute ahead. Except for demonstrations in the field, he executed that method - no written manuscripts, no notes, not outline. I remember the first conference I gave in tactics, I put an outline in bold letters on the floor on some paper and nobody could see and as I walked back and forth, I could see it. Now a thing like that was permissible the first time. Except for that first conference, I don't think we had any outline. That method of instruction has been carried on at Benning every since he was there. I remember I gave a demonstration in weapons - I had been over in the Weapons Section over a year. We held sort of an orientation conference for instructors so each instructor would find out what the other sections were doing so there would not be too much by compartments. Gen. Marshall started that. Well, they asked me, "Gen. Bradley, I don't guess you have anything in the Weapons Section you want to show", and I said, "I certainly have". So I arranged a demonstration to show these other people - teach them tactics - what we were thinking about. We were developing new methods of antitank fire, indirect laying, direct lying of machine guns, and all sort of things we were working on in the Weapons Section which would make it more interesting for troops taking it and also would make it more effective.

I think there were 14 exhibits that I wanted to put on out in the field and I was faced with the decision as to whether to let my instructor who was the expert in this thing to take each step and explain it, etc., to the big group of instructors - about 70 of them, I guess - or whether I would do it. Rather fortunately for me, I guess, I decided I would do it and I explained at the first exhibit that I was going to do all the talking, that I did not know everything but if they asked me questions I could not answer, here was my expert and I always introduced him, Capt. so and so,

and he was an expert in this thing and if I could not answer it, we would call on him. But to save time, I would do it because if we did not do that way, every man would have to warm up - it takes about 3 minutes to warm up - well, that is about 40 minutes gone. So I did it and instead of taking about 4 hours, we did it in 2 hours. When we got through, Gen. Marshall said, "Bradley, that's the best demonstration I ever saw. I want you to give it to every class that comes to Benning." It shows you how he was impressed with what we were doing in the Weapons Section. In the two years I had that Section, he only came in my office to tell me to do something once and he sent for me once to offer some suggestions on something. The test of the time, he gave you a job, he came around and saw you doing it and might offer a suggestion right there on the field. He didn't try and bother you and tell you how to do it. He gave you a job and let you do it. When you started off on so thing and he had any suggestions to make, he made them at the time but he just did not try to tell you how to do the job. And that was one of the greatest pleasures in working for him that he did it that way.

When he came in my office one time, I had a change from an outdoor demonstration to an indoor one because of rain and I had a new instructor and he was botching it up terribly on the blackboard and I went over there and watched him for a while and I just could not stand it any longer and I left word at the end of that hour, he was to call it off and do something else. I went back to my office to try and figure out what we could do. Right after I left, Marshall went in and he heard the same thing I heard and he came right to my office and I said, "Colonel, I just left there - it was terrible. I am trying to change it the next hour to so and so." Very unfortunate for me that he walked in just then. He knew what was going on all the time. If he got a good man - or he thought he was good - and had confidence in him, he would tell him what he wanted done. He knew what was going on - don't misunderstand me. He knew everything that was going on but he did not get down and try to tell you how to do it each minute like some people do.

I don't think people thought he was a tough man but everyone respected his ability and knew that he was thoroughly conscious of everything that was going on. They did not dare slip whether it was instruction, appearance, or what it was, they just knew that they could not get away with anything. They were afraid of him in a way to that extent. They just thought, my goodness, what will happen to me if I do this thing wrong. As a result, they all tried very hard. They thoroughly respected his ability and leadership. They did not think he was a tough commander or tough leader but they just realized he knew his job and they better deliver.

Q. It has been said he was like Pershing but I don't think he was according to what I have heard of Gen. Pershing - he was not tough on details but tough per se.

He was much more human than Gen. Pershing, I think. Although I did not know Gen. Pershing well, I have gotten most of my information from hearsay.

Q. Pershing was more like Gen. Patton in wanting to have the uniform just right, etc. Gen. Marshall had a reason for all his.

Yes, he wanted the uniform to be right but he wasn't unreasonable about it. I have seen Patton a lot of times when I considered he was very unreasonable on his requirements.

Q. I gather Gen. Pershing was that way, too. I gather Gen. Marshall did not swear, or scream or jump up and down.

No, he was very quiet.

Q: At the same time, he could make it known, he did not like this.

One time in north Africa when we were waiting to go into Sicily, we had an amphibious landing demonstration and Gen. Marshall was observing it and something went wrong - some little thing - not too much - but something you wanted to correct but Gen. Patton began running around there screaming and putting on a show. Pink Bull was standing there and he said, "Brad, there goes a higher command out the window." Gen. Marshall did not say a word but you could see that it was so foreign to his way of quietly making the corrections, etc. etc.

Gen. Bradley mentions first draft of his book - 600,000 words which he had to boil down. Dr. Pogue asked him if he still had that material and he said that he did but that he thought he ought to burn it up. Dr. Pogue cautions him not to. Gen. Bradley says he has 1,250,000 words on these little discs and wonders whether he will keep them because he has dictated everything on Patton. Dr. Pogue points out this kind of record could solve all the ugly controversies that go on and on and on.

Closes this side of tape with a discussion of the Veterans' Administration.

Dr. Pogue tells his of what is being done by G.C.M Research Center.

Gen. Bradley says in closing, "I think Gen. Marshall is the greatest living American today. I am not saying this to detract from President Truman, or President Eisenhower or anybody else, I just think he is one the greatest men we have ever produced and the things he did to prepare us - the leadership he showed a year before Pearl Harbor - are not appreciated by the people. I was in his office at the time as Asst SGS and I know some of the things he did advanced us by months, maybe a year, in getting ready for this thing and I just shudder to think what would have happened if we had had someone else as Chief of Staff."