

Notes 19N, Copy 2

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L. H. Hall

Seattle, Washington

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INTERVIEW WITH V. J. GREGORY AND L. H. HALL SEATTLE, WASHINGTON,
7 November 1960 .

(These men had served in CCC under Marshall at Vancouver)

Some people to see: Todorovic; Bernhard A. Johnson (later civilian in China when Marshall there); Addelon Hogan--Camp Kilpac; Joel Pomerene, executive officer for CCC; Dr. Chan, head of China Institute, NYC, knew about Marshall in China.

Pomerene (relative of the senator's) lasted through several changes of commanders. He tended to be circumspect under Marshall. Marshall gave most of his instructions through me. Unless he wanted to make his own decision and then he did it. Walton H. Walker was for a time acting executive of the 5th brigade and of the CCC.

Hall said, "Walker gave me a five-paragraph form to use in investigations. I made one of these and he called me in and took apart my report. I never forgot it."

Gregory: Walker had a barrel chest, almost no neck, his head was just stuck on his shoulders, beautiful physique, erect, carrying his head back, protruding pale blue eyes. Characteristics of a soldier in his speech and accent He was not domineering but very positive. He was tenacious. Hall added: "I last saw Walker in 1945. I went to a conference at Camp Grant, Illinois. Marshall was there."

I was executive officer at Vancouver and then G-I [Hal I came in 1933] and stayed on. I was a captain as was Gregory. This was as high as they could go in CCC.

Grunert succeeded Marshall. He was not outstanding. Marshall had little regard for Pomerene. He never got any higher.

Hall was adjutant and Gregory was assistant district inspector. Hopkins with the Headquarters commandant. (Hopkins was later sent to a difficult camp in the desert--Camp Brothers) Hopkins was an athlete and natural born leader. He handled it.

Kittrell was the auditor. We considered him relatively indispensable.

Colonel John H. Thomas, Pentagon had a camp from the south.

Marshall took more interest in the CCC than in the regular army.

Each of us had had a camp in the beginning. Gregory had Boston gangsters on a camp in an Indian reservation near Pendleton. Earlier, Hall had a company from southside Chicago and Gregory came from Oregon. They used the same recreation center. Corlett was then in charge of the Eugene district. The Eugene district was absorbed by the Vancouver area. Parsons had combined the areas. He was blustering, bluff, autocratic. I remember he came to my camp at Pendleton at 6 a.m. The kitchen was in action but I was asleep. He wanted to know why I

wasn't taking any action.

Both Hall and Gregory said that the early CCC days were very difficult.

Gregory: If you didn't use your ingenuity to the maximum, you did not survive. They recalled someone showing up at a camp and finding the men in the line to the mess hall throwing rocks at the flag. They were trading supplies to the girls. In the north, they shot sheep for food. Hall said he solved his own problem by choosing as his first sergeant a black-eyed Irishman who had been runner up in the Golden Gloves tournament.

The company commander relieved by Hall was transferred. Soon afterwards, he bought a new car and travelled somewhere on a ferry with a bunch of the men from his former camp. They all yelled, "There goes our mess fund."

Gregory said that in his camp he selected a Portland gang leader as his 1st sergeant.

Hall said his first outfit was in Nebraska in 1933. He said that many of the men came from the south, east, and middle west and stayed on. Each man could stay in for 18 months. The chief discipline they could impose was to fire the individual and make him go home.

In the Forest Service, they often worked in cut-over areas where they would find wire rope and things left by the loggers. One boy kept ruining his saw on a limb and we found there was an old cable there. We developed a radio network over the district. Gregory was in charge. He taught the men how to receive and send. Most of these later went into the Navy.

Hall: In the camps, we had regular officers and regular non-coms. They didn't last for the most part. They were often treated pretty rough. The men threw, one major in the Columbia River. The officers usually didn't want this duty.

I was sent to build a camp in the winter. Snow was on the ground. One of the men asked if I wanted a rifle and fishing tackle. He said that the officer before me had asked for that the first thing. Officers in the CCC were taken from the Navy, Marine Corps and the Army.

The administrative set up of the district CCC was at Vancouver. It included the Forestry Service, National Forestry, State Forestry Service, Conservation Corps. These Various groups had the men during working hours. The military had them during other hours. That was the headache. You had to team up with these others to handle the boys. If they failed to work, it came back to us. At one time, Vancouver had 44 companies.

The work part of the detail was handled by a camp superintendent and his foreman. They had their own motor pool.

Twice a year a number of companies moved to east Oregon. Twice a year we shipped men whose enrollment had expired and got replacements. I remember taking one train load back east--544 Bostonians--who didn't even know where the Battle of Bunker Hill was fought.

Despite these things, we did a wonderful work. The average individual when he came in had to learn to work. They had no idea of what work was. Most had never worked. We would usually allocate the local experienced men to eastern companies (I assume companies made up of men from the east). These were older men in their 30s, 40s, and 50s. They got the better jobs.

Each camp had its own athletic program. Marshall took a great deal of interest in these and handed out the awards. There was boxing, baseball, races, and basketball. Marshall's staff took for granted that his primary concern was for the welfare of the boys. The General used to say that he went out to see the staff and not the camp. The camps covered a huge area from the west coast to eastern Oregon. In 1935, Hall was assistant G-4 in charge of camp construction. He built nine portable camps at the same time. This was an interesting period. The G-4 was Captain Kilpac, one of the finest officers I ever met. Camp Kilpac was named after him. Had he lived, Marshall would have spotted him.

Hall trained under Irving Alexander, the official aide to General Parsons. He knew everything in the district. He was very exacting but had a sense of humor. Hall had gone into the reserves as a second lieutenant in 1927. Before going into CCC he was the President of the Lane County Chapter of Reserve Officers. He was an accountant for a big lumber company.

Gregory was working for the Minneapolis Tribune when he got a call one morning asking if he would like to go to Oregon for six months. He dumped the magazine that he was working on on his wife. At the end of six months, he extended his stay and on the third extension, he decided he loved Oregon and would stay on there.

Both Hall and Gregory were in World War I.

Every day at nine, Marshall would come in to his office. Hall would take the papers down to him and he would handle them between 9 and 11 usually. He would discuss a lot of things with me. He wanted to teach me not to have "adjutantitis." (Gregory said he said to me one day, "You haven't called on me for help.")

At the first staff meeting, Marshall went down the line and got the names of all the people. At the end of the meeting he talked about each man and called his name. He seemed to be more informal with the reserve officers than the regular army officers. There was no saluting with us. He urged us to be specific, brief, and to the point. He could say more in two paragraphs than I could say in a year and a half.

Gregory said Marshall asked him once to write a letter for the IX Corps Area Commander. He chopped the letter all to pieces and made it brief and personal. He seemed to chafe under corps area regulations. He delighted in circumventing them. He had a saying that regulations didn't help the weak and they hindered the strong. I remember once the Corps Commander came by and came out and saw the men out in their undershirts. Marshall didn't worry about that. He didn't pull his punches on the staff. He said there was no substitute for brains.

He decided once there were too many people reporting to him so he set up sub-district inspectors, Kerr, Hopkins and Johnson. An auditor covered all the camps. There was no serious

problem on funds accounting. A very tight check was kept on these. The entire area was kept free from funds problems. (This reminded Hall that when he acted as G-I to U.S. Grant, III, an audit of the funds showed that the NCO funds were in bad shape. Grant said, "Don't you think those sergeants in charge would like to retire?") There was a technical manual on keeping funds and mess funds. It was a tough process to teach. It Kittrell found 10¢ missing, he would ask to be reimbursed for that amount. The failure to take a discount would cause trouble.

There were 8000 men in our district. The strength varied every day. The Corps area took turns sending them in.

There were continuous problems of reorienting.

There were diet problems. Some men could not eat green vegetables. Others would not eat sea food. Once we had a bunch of small fish and the boys would not eat them. There were problems with the State Patrol and the local police. Problems over visiting hours and recreation facilities.

Men got ready once in one camp to move in on two local people.

Marshall would write the mothers of men.

Hall repeated an old story, told about other officers in slightly different form.

Marshall liked to work in his rose garden dressed in old cover-alls. Once a guard came by with two prisoners and saw Marshall working. He said he asked, "How long have you been in?" "About thirty years." "Thirty years and still a buck private."

He remembers Marshall coming out once with Arnold and landing at Pearson Field.

Marshall held the plane up while talking to a sergeant. He remembers that Arnold was shabbily dressed.

A note on Hopkins. The men were attracted to him and it seemed he had a fine future, but he didn't do well on maneuvers and he settled back into his old sphere.