

Notes 72N, Copy 2

Gen. Courtney H. Hodges

San Antonio, Texas

November 7, 1957

THIS INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT MAY BE USED FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY. IT MAY NOT BE QUOTED FROM, CITED OR PUBLISHED EXCEPT BY PERMISSION OF THE GEORGE C. MARSHALL FOUNDATION.

Interview with Gen. Courtney H. Hodges, former commander of 1st Army, at his home in San Antonio, Texas, Nov 7, 1957 by F C Pogue.

(Gen Hodges is breaking somewhat but still has a good memory).

I asked him first about the suggestion, made by his former Chemical officer, that they knew at First Army in July 1944 that they would have to fight the Russians. He said he was provoked by the attitude of some he met, but had no such view. (It was clear he felt we needed their help) He said in the last weeks of the war, his division and corps commanders all wanted to go on to Berlin and Prague and that they could have done it, but that he was preparing to go to Japan and they were preparing to take men out of units and send there. He obviously was not part of any move to fight for the line of the Elbe.

He said that he had escorted the Russian delegation around in June or July 1944, I reminded him that - had seen him on this mission at 5th Division headquarters. He said one of the men was an admiral and was much decorated. A British officer along, crawled out Later: "Do you know how he got to be an admiral, general. It seems that in the revolution he was a member of the crew on a ship and he helped stoke the furnace with his commander, SO he got his start toward being an admiral." Hodges said he was a little provoked at some of the superior attitude of the Russians and that he said top Gen Bradley jokingly, "Do you want me to bring them back from a visit to the front?"

Gen Hodges gave me a list of the officers of the 13th Infantry at Ft. McKinley, Phil. Is in 1914, showing Gen Marshall as Lt and Hodges as 2nd Lt. He said Gen Marshall was interested in topography and that he has a volunteer class of junior lieutenants teaching them map reading. He was always a dedicated soldier; always learning. He was not with us too many months. He was acting chief of staff at Batangas. I think he was kept most of the time after that at Manila. Gen Hodges recalled story told by Gen Arnold, who was also a lieutenant then, about Marshall and the field order in maneuvers.

Officers were stiff in those days. We junior officers called the 1st lieutenants Mister and I remember calling him Mr. Marshall. I knew Arnold better than I did Gen Marshall. Arnold was a great shooter and we went out together. Said he hunted with Gen Marshall a good bit at Benning and that the General on one occasion, which he remembered, killed more ducks than he did.

McKinley was a great rambling post. Officers quarters were inside. Hilly country. Long winding roadway a full mile around camp. Acacia trees all along. First he had a club; most of the entertainment centered there.

Mrs. Marshall was very charming. Very much the size of the present Mrs. Marshall; doesn't think of her as frail. She softened Gen Marshall a bit. Had a little red tint to her hair; young and vivacious. Charming lady.

The post was seven miles out from Manila. Part of the troops were stationed in Manila. There was the 24th Inf (colored), 13th, 7th Cavalry, 9th Cavalry. Had one airplane; training plane.

I headed for the Air Corps that year, but had a bum ear. Arnold sent in the applications. He made it.

Said he saw Gen Marshall in France in World War I. Thinks he came to the 5th Division while he was there. Marshall did the plan for concentrating forces at St. Mihiel. I didn't see so much of him. I was a battalion commander and he was at higher headquarters.

I didn't see him in Washington when he was Pershing's aide. I came back as regimental commander. Then when to Ft. Sill and then to tactical officer job at West point. I saw Marshall there when Pershing came up.

I always thought he was clever. Pershing wanted to meet officers. Marshall would stand by him and as he came by he would say 1st Div, DSC, 5th Division Chief of Staff. It was clever of him to know these things and to see that the General spoke to the men. He was right on the job.

Marshall worked on the reorganization of the army while he was with Pershing.

I went then to Sill and to West point and Leavenworth and Benning.

Went to the 28th Inf at Benning. I was detailed as instructor for one year. The Chief of Infantry promised the Chief of Air Corps he could have an infantry major at his Air Corps Tactical School at Langley Field, so I went.

(February 1927)

Marshall went to Benning in 1928. He came to Langley once. First time I had seen him since 1923 or 1924. Then he asked if I would like to go to Benning. I said I wanted to go to troops. I went as a member of the Infantry Board 1930-33. This board passed on all equipment for the infantry; tested everything from halter straps to tanks. Rifles, tanks, etc. Charley Hart, Col Baltzell, Col Brown, Griswold, Huebner, Barney Legge were on it.

Gen Marshall was interested in everything that pertained to the welfare and training of the array—its equipment, He was vitally interested.

Infantry School concentrated on the proper training of officers for leadership in combat. One thing he stressed was that junior officers don't fight at their desk—must be in field. Bulk of problems were on the ground.

Marshall insisted on that. A great deal was in coordination of supporting weapons like artillery. Any problem included use of combined arms. None of this could be gotten by reading a book. He practically forbade book solutions. Later 80 per cent was outside.

Got rid of the old cumbersome drill. Favored simplified drill. I was detailed to get the tests going. He may have inspired it. Drill devised then is now in effect. Supple but loses nothing of the value of discipline. Just as effective as the old on the field.

Marshall felt you should save time in mobilization. Get to field problems.

In World War I more time was spent in close order drill than anything else. Commandant and Asst Commandant at Benning were members of Infantry Board. Sat in on conferences.

(__*1930-32)

Col. Marshall was extremely active. He was present at most of the field exercises. I saw him many times in the class rooms. He was an absolutely dedicated soldier. He was very dignified, but could move around.

Marshall picked some of his instructors and took others from the previous assistant commandant. He was always looking after the new ones.

He and his group of instructors had the help of the whole school and of the 29th Infantry. Recruits would come in. We slashed close order drill and rifle training and put them in the same week. He started shooting the second week.

At this period (I don't know who inspired it, but it came from Washington) we were told to prepare a training schedule for a newly mobilized regiment of infantry. This was not just a matter of reviewing the old one. He started from scratch with a proper cadre. It may look simple if you don't start digging. It started us on the question of how long it takes a recruit to learn certain things. Bradley was helpful on how many hours it takes with machine guns, rifles and the like. We went through each phase of training to try to get it into 16 weeks. I remember that Gen Marshall sat in on a number of conferences to get it ready for mobilization.

Bradley and others worked on this. That thing took a long time. Worked on it fully a year. Very basis when mobilization came. I was chief of infantry in Washington when Pearl Harbor came--this was just a question I asked to clear up his status.

I remember general Marshall called the chiefs in and told us the situation at that time of Pearl Harbor. Didn't seem upset.

I know that general Marshall always had the big picture of mobilization of this country for war. I don't remember he ever varied from the subject at hand. Have the army ready for whatever came. He felt he should develop leaders. Keep officers in physical trim.

Liked for us to go shooting. Sergeant Tweed was his favorite hunting companion. Marshall came down to Benning after he became chief of staff. Said he wanted to go quail shooting. Someone wanted to arrange a hunting party for him. He said he wanted Sergeant Tweed and a couple of dogs. Tweed was an unusual man--very reticent--small--very bright and understanding. Ran kennels and was chief range guard. Find shot and trainer. He didn't talk much and that suited Gen Marshall.

I have shot doves would Gen Marshall; also clay birds. Bradley hunted with him more than I did.

He was interested in equipment. I recall he was interested in the jeep. We got one of those little British cars to test. Everyone who had been in France knew that you couldn't inspect a column from a motorcycle. We needed something you could use on the road. Marshall was in on the test of the British car. It wasn't good enough. Board asked for a four wheel drive and big tires. Motor industry laughed at the idea. Ended up that way. Marshall pushed it.

Tanks was another thing he was interested in. Tank development got into the doldrums.

He was interested in the development of automatic weapons and came out for a number of tests. Marshall was very sociable. Had small parties. I remembered that he was a person who thought when you were through with a party you should get out. He said goodbye and walked out. Didn't like hanging around.

(I came to Washington in February 1941 and left March 1942. When they disbanded offices of combat arms I was detailed to replacement and school command. Devers asked me how about taking a field command - -said he had a corps. He said he would ask Marshall. I was given X Corps and then later went to 3rd army. Says he thinks Gen Marshall offered Bradley, Simpson and me for command in Europe).

Marshall had his own way of doing things. He had to go to Mexico for a celebration and he stopped to see me. He said how about going to Africa and Italy and look things over. I said I would like to go the last of October. I thought we would forget it. A little later the order came out. I was gone a month. I think he was giving me a chance to prepare myself.

My first real service with Eisenhower was when we were built under MacArthur in 1936-38. I was G-3 Philippine Department. I tried to train the Philippine army for MacArthur. Organized school with 450 scouts.

In regard to the Pacific, Gen Marshall had to make that decision as to which theater came first. I think the decision he made was right.

I saw Gen Marshall a great deal when I was Chief of Infantry. He always told me when you go out on trips and then return, come in and tell me what you have seen. As Chief of Infantry I had the Infantry school, the paratroop schools, four infantry replacement centers (big as divisions), scattered from the Carolinas to California. This was part of the whole thing. He realized he had to push the whole thing of mobilizing and training this army as rapidly as it could be done.

He was much interested in 1940-41 in officers who headed these training outfits. Training centers were the size of divisions. I told him I wanted young brigadiers to put in command of training centers because there wouldn't be anybody with better background when they got a division. They had the same job. Divisions were not able to put their troops through infantry training centers. I picked some rather unusual men and he let me have them - -Huebner, Patch, Simpson--handpicked and marked men. They were afraid that they would miss out on field command. I said just saw wood, you are going up. Simpson, I remember, was perturbed. (We had chased Pancho Villa for a long time together).

When I was Chief of Infantry we were in the old Munitions building. I saw Gen Marshall at least once a month. Sometimes was called in oftener.

I remember his telling us in the clearest English of what had happened at Pearl harbor. He just stated facts. (I asked Gen Hodges about Gen Short. He said I am not a good person to ask. I didn't like him).

Gen Marshall had a regular system of picking commanders. He always had to have a list of people we recommended for stars. This petered out when people got into the field. Recommendations then came through divisions, corps or training armies. He had lists of men who should be brigadiers. He was always hunting leaders. He was one of the chief organizers in our history.

Gen Marshall was an honest, straightforward gentleman. Well brought up and well educated. Absolutely dedicated soldier. I think he saw the broad picture of the Nation at war more clearly than most people I know. We knew we must have leaders and he said train, train, train. He demanded that they live up to high standards, He was interested in his officers--not only in military knowledge but that they be physically fit.

Gen Hodges said he had checked with a number of people in San Antonio to see if they could be of some issue. He said you know there are some people who don't like him. Some had said they didn't know him very well. Others said they had nothing to say. He said perhaps I should see Gen Grunert who was a little reluctant to talk.