

Notes 99N, Copy 2

Maj. Gen. Samuel T. Lawton

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Interview with Maj Gen Samuel T. Lawton, member of staff of 33d Division when Marshall was senior instructor; and later commander of the 33d Division, at Executive Club, April 30, 1958, Chicago, by F C Pogue.

Lawton, who was removed from Natl Guard command in 1941, talked to me briefly on the 29th. Next day as we met he told me he had recently read the closing pages of Miss Coit's life of Baruch and said he was impressed by her statement that his life was a study in frustration because he never held office. He said if he feels frustrated what about others who don't get as far. Shall we feel frustrated because we don't climb the last rung.

I asked him about the Samuel Tilden in his name. Said his mother was immigrant girl--member of large family--probably only one who could read. She was much impressed by Tilden-Hayes election. Remembered the name and when he was born, she named him Samuel Tilden although he was born several years later. Remembers election of 1896 because of a picnic where they had some vaudeville performers. They sang jingle about being out of a job since Cleveland came in.

Then to Marshall. Said that Marshall was one of the most soldierly men he ever met. Every inch a soldier. Said that he got along with Marshall because although he, Lawton, was a cavalryman, he had concluded they must be motorized and had argued that with his friends. Marshall strong for motorization. He said he had joined the cavalry after getting his law degree. Read ad one day and it said get your rides free by joining the National Guard. I was old enough to know better, but I joined.

When Marshall came here in 1933 he knew our whole story. On his first visit he came to see Schwengel and our staff and we went to the Red Star Inn on Clark Street near the horse drawn armory and talked. He knew all of our history, the weaknesses and everything else. Our artillery supported the 1st Division at St Mihiel. In the Argonne we supported several different divisions--2d, 89th, etc.

We had three inch guns by the time we left the U. S. in the first war. Never used them. Used the 75. Had French instructors. I got a good reputation in the artillery because of something which happened in one of the mathematics classes we were required to attend. My reputation was not deserved. The Frenchmen one night taught us some shortcuts. Then he said I bet no one here can tell me what is nine raised to the ninth power. Just then an officer named Burleson--relative of the Atty General--came in. I multiplied 729 times 729 and then multiplied by that. I had the answer when the instructor asked again and I got a reputation for knowing more than I did.

We had a brigade school for artillery for picked group at day; all officers at night. Tournier was our teacher--a fine French officer.

(Somewhere here he got off on maneuvers in World War II and told about once when some Chinese were put off on the road and told to direct traffic. When their division had passed, they kept swinging their arms down the same road and about two miles' worth of the next division

went down the same way and had to be straightened out. Thinks China probably were there all night pointing the way).

Lt de France was the mathematics instructor; Tournier on guns.

When we moved to the Argonne we were often next to Luke Lea's regiment. Mixed up together. This reminds me of a story of World War II. When time came to move the 33d Div to Tullahoma announcement was made by the adjutant general of Tennessee that they intended to name it after Bedford Forrest. They called me from the TRIBUNE. I said I would be proud to serve in a camp named after a man of such dash and color. TRIBUNE mixed it up. Word got down south that I opposed the idea and I was denounced. One paper said and to make it worse he spoke of color. I was unpopular when I got down there.

We were due to open Forrest March 11, 1941. Chief of Staff was a member of Chamber of Commerce of Rockford (my notes look like the name is Thornton). On March 10 Chamber of Commerce of Nashville gave party for Judge Patterson and his aide--Col Ginsberg. The Tennessee AG invited Thornton, my aide and me. We left on Sunday. They put us up at the Hermitage. Everyone was cool to me. I was told I would be asked for a speech. I could hear people at nearby tables wondering what I would say. When I got up I said that sectionalism was the enemy of mankind. In any form--territorial, religious or color--it did more to divide us than did the enemy. I said there is no basis for division between Illinois and Tennessee. We are bound by a bridge built by territorials from Illinois (I found later, they were from Indiana) who fought by Tennesseans under Jackson at New Orleans. My regiment in WWI fought hub to hub with the 118th under your own Luke Lea. I was in. They gave rebel yells and moved forward toward the table. Patterson said it was tough to follow me. After that Prentice Cooper took me along to meetings. I gave the Flag Day speech at Chattanooga. Went to Florence, Alabama. I got along fairly well due to my knowledge of 118th.

We would send our band to funeral of aged Confederates.

Speaking of Prentice Cooper. He was a little fellow, always accompanied by three huge state troopers. Once in an elevator when he came down between these fellows, the elevator man asked them "Say fellows what did he do?"

My son was the newest 2d lieutenant in one of our batteries. Had been a sergeant in the Guard. Just out of Harvard Law School. Troops went by train and equipment overland. My son went along with equipment. When they got to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, it was pretty rainy, splashed through mud. When they got about 10 miles from Murfreesboro he was where he could see down the straight road and see the belfry of the courthouse. It had been involved in the battle of Stone's River. While stopped for a moment, he was accosted by an ancient southerner who said come to the courthouse and I'll show you what your soldiers did. He decided he would go down and straighten things out before General Lear got word of it. Was all set to go and help his old man out, when the old southerner said "Well now, this thing started here the summer of 1862." My son said "that will be all brother."

I asked him about Negro troops. Said 8th Inf was Negro (became the 178th Combat team under Jones who became minister to Liberia later. I had induced Jones to join before WWII. He became a BG. Had a wonderful record. Relations between white troops and Negroes always wonderful. This outfit didn't stay with us in Tennessee, but we had Negro units. We had a number of southern whites in the 33d, but there was no trouble. No trouble like at Little Rock.

Ill Natl Guard had two regiments of Tenn artillery and one from Colorado. Had 107th Cavalry from Ohio. We were one of last divisions to go into service.

Haffner was a wonderful soldier. Capable, thorough, fine.

I was in Chicago a long time before Keehn. He was a fine leader. We didn't always see eye-to-eye. He lifted up the division. Forman was very colorful. They lost the mold when they made him. He left a fine imprint. Keehn was a fine organizer. Division rose to great heights under him. (Earlier he had told me that after WWI the division was reorganized under Forman. Schwengel began to work on reorganizing artillery brigade. Found that a number of men didn't want to serve under officers they had had in France. Said would serve under Lawton. He asked why me--they said he is the least son of a bitch of the lot.

Keehn was fortunate in getting Marshall. Under Keehn and Marshall the division found itself.

When Marshall was here I had a regiment. We used to have 4 weeks each summer at Sparta. I had the 122d. I would take the middle two weeks when the howitzer outfit was there. During those two weeks Marshall was in camp. He was with the field artillery through the whole thing. He occupied a tent on the brigade line. Some fellows played a joke once and told a guard once to wake the fellow in the last tent at 3:30--go wake up the cook they said. Only happened once. I had the regiment in the summer of 1935 and nominal command of the brigade because Schwengel was absent. He was negotiating for the Seagram job in N. Y. at this time.

I met Marshall shortly after he came here. He came to see a large group of us. Spent the evening talking of his experiences in WWI. He knew all about us. I would meet him on various occasions. He and I were a board for the new chief of staff. We gave him his federal examinations. Marshall gave everything but field artillery and I gave that. My headquarters was at armory on Chicago Avenue. He was on LaSalle Street.

His main impact was through planning. Each regiment has its instructor-inspector. He dealt with various units through these men. Also had a group of sergeant instructors. He visited units personally but his contact was through these people. There is a great deal of autonomy in Guard outfits.

The Guard had its own ideas of how it should be trained. By the time Marshall left they knew that a lot more was expected than ever before. The outfit had far more Regular army training and discipline than before. His impact continued after he left. It became a highly disciplined outfit. Much better organized after that.

Marshall did not give his criticisms direct to units. Always through division headquarters. His experience was different from what he had before. He got to know the citizen-soldier. Probably remained more sympathetic to Natl Guard as a result. His office was always open to us. I never hesitated to call on him. He was very sympathetic.

I took the division in May 1940. Had correspondence with Marshall. I called on him in October 1940. I saw him again in Louisiana on maneuvers. Later I was in Washington on the Dependency Board.

Former commandant of West Point, Jay Benedict, was chairman of Dependency Board. Irving Phillipson was another, Roger Eckfeld and Col Shaw. We had all questions of morale and dependency allotments. As a lawyer I got a lot of tough cases. One was to decide on the question of paying damage to Iceland because we didn't allow paternity cases to go into the courts there. They had a law by which Icelanders involved in these cases paid damage to the Icelandic govt which paid the girl. By May or June 1945 Icelandic govt submitted a bill through Dreyfoos to us. I consulted with the Navy since they were also involved and with the British lest our action set a precedent for them. I called in a young lawyer from Detroit--Freeman--who had written a book on international law. I said we should pay. Matter of grace not law. This was his concept. This was all based on the law relating to damages caused by soldiers marching through a country. No obligation but a country should do what it ought to do.

The last thing I did was to decide a case which would make a good movie. I should have stolen the records. It involved a family of Mexican who had come into this country through El Paso. One group had been thrown out of California. One boy of the family found he served in the American army he could acquire citizenship. He was in Mexico, but he had a cousin who had been born in Tucson. Got the birth certificate and with it crossed the border. Reported for draft under name of the cousin and was called into service. Took insurance in the name of the cousin's mother; no allotment of pay. Went overseas and was killed. Was reported killed and someone called the woman whose name was on the next of kin slip. She said not her son. Question was whether his real mother could get insurance. A letter came from his father saying that the boy had come to fight for the democracies. Last thing I did was to recommend that the money be paid to the real mother. I found authorities which said once service is terminated. Neither the U.S. nor the soldier can deny the service.

McNair was the main person of putting regulars at head of Natl Guard divisions. Smykal wrote me from Burma and told of problems with regulars. I said this is something we have to meet. Don't let's eat our guts out. I have no complaint or criticism of policy. I am quite content. I enlisted in 1909 to get a free horseback ride. May 8, 1909, I was in a restaurant and saw in the personal column an ad: Be a man. Join the Illinois Cavalry and get a free horseback ride every Friday night. I stayed until 1946. I followed my advice to Smykal.

Everyone falls short of his goal. I enlisted to ride horses and had a glorious experience. Much to be said about wisdom of relieving Natl Guard commanders on both sides. I accept it as an accomplished fact. For a civilian I had a unique experience covering 37 years. Carrying out of a similar policy in a future war is inevitable. We should be happy over the usefulness we were able to give. If what we personally received fell short of what we wanted, let us accept the

compromise. There was a measure of justice in it all. Much to be said on both sides. Once it is done we have to live with ourselves.

I knew Lear in the 15th Cavalry at Sheridan. About the fall of 1912. He was captain of a troop. I have a wonderful story about a dentist named Goldberg. Got a commission; then bought him a complete outfit and walked down the street. Every soldier and sailor in area saluted. He didn't know what to do. Went to Marshall Field's. Saw a well dressed man in boots, with swagger stick. Said you look like a good soldier. Can you tell me how to salute. The man (it was Lear) said yes. Gave him lessons in hand salute. Then adjusted his insignia. Didn't let on who he was. Goldberg invited him to lunch. Man said no, but would have coffee. Later learned he was Lear.

Another story is about Patton. I went once to a tank school with several other commanders. We were in a clearing waiting for a demonstration. Out stepped an apparition looking like a man from Mars. Green uniform. Weird buttoned up affair. The man came forward. It was Patton. He said gentlemen this is a new uniform I want them to adopt. The only trouble is that it makes it hard to defecate.

Marshall kept pretty close to headquarters here. He was always helpful and sympathetic. He wasn't difficult when I called on him in Oct 1940. He didn't hurry me. It was the day the selective service bill was signed and he invited me to ride over to the White House and wait for him while he watched the signing.

When we were federalized I told my officers we wouldn't get out in a year. From that time on I prepared the division for war. Didn't let them stay out overnight except Saturday. Bedcheck at 10:30. We had a little apartment in town. I tried to obey rule and be back in. I lived about 12 miles from entrance of camp. Had official car. One night as I was going back it was about 10:30. I told drivers to pick up soldiers and give them a ride. We dropped men off. One man told me he was at a place several miles from where we were. I said how do you expect to get there in time for bedcheck. He was in front seat and said we don't have it. I said how is that. He said I will tell you how we beat it. I said before you do, I had better tell you I issued the order. He said Oh no. I said you are my guest and told the driver to take him home.