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Gen. Joseph T. McNarney

U. S. Grant Hotel

San Diego, California

February 2, 1966

Interview with Gen. Joseph T. McNarney by F C Pogue at U. S. Grant Hotel, San Diego, California, Feb 2, 1966.

When summoned by General Marshall, McNarney was in London as part of the observer group there. Was CofS, as a brigadier general, under Gen Chaney. Left London on the day of Pearl Harbor on six weeks temporary duty. On the train going to catch Flying Boat to Washington, someone told him of Pearl Harbor attack. He said they were crazy to tell such a story.

Flew to Lisbon and waited for the Thursday Flying Boat to Washington. Thursday morning after attack, as he was coming down in the elevator, he saw members of crew of plane. They told him it was last flight out.

Portugal intended to intern Americans. "I became disturbed." Got hold of Kuter. Around 9 PM he got a call from Pan American, saying that he could go. Left about 2 AM. Went along African coast, then to South America, Jamaica, Bermuda, New York and then to Washington.

Reported to Marshall and he said McNarney you are going to Hawaii on Roberts Board. I had no baggage; just clothes I was in. He said I was to leave next day. Said nothing about War Dept reorganization. I stayed two weeks in Hawaii. At conclusion of Roberts Board report, he told me that he wanted me to head the committee to reorganize the War Dept. Too many people were reporting to him. Took too long to get any paper through the War Dept. Everybody had to concur. About 28 people had to pass on matters. Said "I can't stand it."

Harrison and Kuter had been working on a draft. But their draft didn't give Gen Marshall exactly what they wanted. They had an outline of Air, Ground and Supply. Didn't touch General Staff. (I had been on Gen Staff Twice—2 or 3 years in G-2 and 1 1/2 in War Plans. I knew some of the difficulties of the Gen Staff. Not enough or too much.)

The Gen Staff had started to expand. G-1 over 100; G-2 not so bad; Operations---10 (he means G-3 Ops); G-4 large. They were not policy people but were trying to make policy.

Nothing done to ease the change. By fiat, I said G-1, G-2, G- G-4 can have 10 Gen Staff peoples and twenty helpers and no more. I went along with commanding generals of the three forces. Wiped out the chiefs of arms--CA, FA, Inf, Cav. Cut off the heads of chiefs of ordnance, engineers, chemical warfare, The exception was JAG. All others reported to SOS.

With aid of assistant JAG I wrote Executive Order putting all this into effect. General Marshall approved. Discussed it with him 1 1/2 hours. Cut down the number reporting to him to about six. It cut out two deputy chiefs of staff. He said is that enough. He added "You do it."

Took it next to Stimson who approved. Then took it to the President. He was in the dentist chair. The girl receptionist took it to him and said they want approval right away. He was mad. I got bawled out over the telephone. I had merely told her it had top priority, President asked Marshall next day "who is McNarney; you had better fire him." Gen Marshall said "When I find people who get things done, I won't fire them."

Next set up a committee with representatives of various interested groups. Called meeting. Chief of Field Artillery cried on General Marshall's shoulder.

I said this committee is not a voting committee nor debating society. It is to put into effect an executive order signed by the President. Everybody went to it.

Somervell had the most difficult job with all the services. Had to relieve one or two heads to get cooperation. He did a fine job.

We had our disagreements. He would get red and then white. He would say sometimes I won't do it. I would say "The hell you're not."

General McNair went along quite well with the reorganization. Otto Nelson and I did the work. Otto from West Point; he became my assistant. I had one secretary. We did the work of three deputies. We got 5 or 6 bright assistants. They got the concurrences and then brought them to me. It worked like a charm.

General Marshall made me Deputy Chief of Staff. In effect he turned over the Zone of the Interior to me and he concentrated on overseas forces.

General Marshall was not there the day when the Japanese had taken just about everything in the Philippines. Question came "how long were they to hold Corregidor." Called me in the middle of the night. Eisenhower was then head of Operations Division. I got him and a couple of other people. We said hold to the last. We thought it would be bad if we surrendered like the British/I suppose he means Singapore. Eisenhower prepared the cable. I took it to Stimson who ok'd it.

The chiefs of arms were antagonistic to change. Gen Herr wanted to keep his horses (he was chief of Cavalry). Too many people who had to concur. Couldn't put up with them.

I attended the morning briefings. If I had anything I took it up with General Marshall there. However, anytime I had something urgent, I went right on in with it.

I was the first person to move into the Pentagon. My office was next door to General Marshall's. I saw him often.

Earlier when I was in War Plans I had to go to see General Marshall several times. I was head of the War Plans Branch; most of my dealings were with the Navy. Worked with Kelly Turner, who was a bastard. I would cuss him out. He was an SOB; didn't want anyone's ideas but his own. Somervell was a little like that too.

General Marshall at onetime suggested me for his successor as Chief of Staff. First time I went to see General Marshall, I laid out some plans we were working on. He made some remark about what he wanted. I said "Jesus, man, you can't do that." He looked startled. I thought he would put me out. However, I talked to the SGS, Col Ward. He said "It's OK; he likes for people to speak-out."

I had observation groups in World War I. In six corps. I would take one man and go to a new corps. Then would set up an office and brief squadron commanders. Would take them through the first battle and then go to another corps. Air officer not very useful at that time. No one sent you any information.

In the later stages of the war, we got some bomb racks and put them on planes would go over the soup lines and drop bombs to scatter the men. No great effect, but fun to watch them scatter. We lacked power to break up concentrations of troops. The fighters stayed busy chasing off other planes.

In 1944 I took Devers' place under Field Marshal Wilson, In med terrain. It was difficult to deal with the British. I commanded the 15th Army Group for a week or ten days, but they didn't trust me much. Montgomery was more difficult to deal with than the Russians with whom I dealt on the Control Council. Alanbrooke was stupid on some things too.

Recalls difficulties with Sokolowsky, -----* Said Russian guards along the border would get tight and raid farms over on our side of the line. I would protest to Sokolowsky but nothing would be done. Finally I ordered the Constabulary to go after them. One night they caught Russians coming out of a farmhouse and killed three or four. One of them must have been politically important. Sokolowsk demanded that I hang my people. I said they were carrying out my orders. He wrote two or three letters. I threw the fourth one in the wastebasket. He was just trying to put something on the record.

Arnold recommended me for the Roberts Commission.

After the war I favored keeping the 1942 organization of the War Department. Thought if it worked in war, why not in peace. I disagreed with those who wanted to change. Somervell was responsible for work of all supply agencies.

Slender, reddish face, not too tall, fine officer.

As a member of the observer group in Great Britain, I went to select places to put divisions and air forces.

Guadalcanal--King got a lot of stuff from the UK buildup. /That is materiel that should have gone to UK/. Big shortage was in landing craft.

I worked a good bit with Mr. Stimson. Only had one argument with him. He wanted to exempt certain students from the draft. This at a time when we were drafting cripples. He brought in a classmate of mine to try to educate me.

Air autonomy. Somebody was always wanting a separate air force. Mitchell was strong for that. It was frustrating trying to work with G-3 at times. I didn't like the rule that we could go only 100 miles offshore. I worked with General Andrews for a time when that problem was up. /This was at Langley Field/.

He thinks the GHQ Air Force fell apart when Andrews left. G-3 was set on breaking up GHQ. We destroyed G-3-

General Marshall--He would say he wanted this. "You do it." Just too bad if you didn't. He was grim at times. Put the fear of God into people just by looking at them. He was a fine operator. If he wanted something done, he would tell you what it was and you went and did it. He didn't tell you how. He gave authority and responsibility. He didn't have time to do more. It was not intended that he should solve all problems. That was what the staff was for. He knew how a staff should operate. He seldom relaxed. I recall only once on a party together that he ever relaxed with me. Usually strictly business.

Everybody liked "Jumbo" Wilson. Very outgoing. Wore an old sweater around headquarters. Alexander was stiffer--a blueblood.

I went to Clark's headquarters two or three times a month.

I didn't favor the Trieste invasion plan. Recalls Alanbrooke showing him a map of area. It is BS that they had a careful plan.

After the war was sent up as military representative to UN.

Recalls talking to Gen Marshall about Korea.

When he was in the State Department, I was over to see him 2 or 3 times. I worked some with Forrestal.

Couldn't get anything done on TN commission with Russians saying No all the time. We met once a week and got nowhere. Competition to see who could adjourn the fastest.

When I was head of the Air Materiel Command, they kept me here much of the time on temporary duty. I worked with Forrestal in Defense Dept. to increase Air Force budget. I appointed a little group to go over the budget. Discussed each item. Everybody asked for too much. Tried to break down items; started a scrap. I couldn't go along with the Navy. I asked Forrestal to attend our next meeting. The Navy disagreed as usual. Forrestal brought me into his office. Finally I took budget to Truman. He said it was too much. I think we wanted \$16 billion; Truman said \$12 billion. Louis Johnson was a better administrator than Forrestal. Forrestal played a piano of buttons. Did not delegate authority. Wore him out as a result.

This interview wasn't quite as spotty as this indicates. However, he didn't feel at ease at certain points when he saw me taking notes, so I had to jot down random notes afterwards/.

General Sir Leslie Hollis, head of the secretariat of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, though the Washington conference the most difficult of all those held between Great Britain and the United States. "The Americans were reeling under the disaster of Pearl Harbor, and possibly a little nervous that the war-tried British might try to tell them what to do. We, on the other hand, were anxious to show that we had no desire to act as senior partners in the new-formed alliance, but as

equals. We had no pattern to guide us, and the discussions were here fore long and wearisome."
/Leasor, CLOCK WITH FOUR HANDS, p. 22/.