

Notes 129N, Copy 2

Maj. Gen. H. M. Monroe

**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 Major General H.M. Monroe

He (Marshal) was into everything and he seems to be tireless. Dr. Pogue: I never quite understood just how he was preparing the infantry for future war. You couldn't have expected him to beat Japan or German by 1931 or 1932 -- you might expect him to beat Japan. He was long before Hitler, and yet the impression I get from talking with people about this thing is if there are a war, not too distant.

When I think of the emphasis he put on the study of terrain--he talked about that over and over. That made a deep impression on me. The value to a soldier of knowing how to make it serve him in case he has to fight. He certainly must have been thinking that that sort of thing is going to be of value to some of these people.

He had the ability of teaching young officers in a short time what they needed to know. Manuals were being done over all the time. Dr. Pogue: Someone told me that they were working on the elimination of some of the elaborate drill system that had been in effect for a long time. Yes, that's probably where Joe Collins made a hit. He came up with some paper on that that caught the fancy of Gen. Marshall. They were trying out different things all the time. The 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry, it was a school regiment; they had different units working on it all the time. The 24<sup>th</sup> was there too. That was the unit that did all the labor. All the people around the work details around there came from the 24<sup>th</sup>. .... ?

They had the advanced class and the company officers class. The adv. class was for captains and some majors. .. perhaps a L/C or two, and the company officers class were lieutenants mostly. Apparently during that period they began to bring home the advanced classman and upper classmen from WestPoint for a short period maybe a week or so for observation. Dr. Pogue: I found a letter, from some cadet, saying that he had been assigned a paper under him. Later, he suggested that they assign every West Pointer to directory panel? A. I graduated from West Point in 1918. Everybody in the infantry and the cavalry were sent to Fort Benning. We were there from the 1<sup>st</sup> of Dec. until the next March. Then so many people were sent to Siberia...? I was three classes behind Gen. Eisenhower and Gen. Bradley. Hit it just right. The poor fellow was about four or five years before....? People in my time were lieutenants for about 17 years. My brother who graduated in 1914; he was a major by the time that I was appointed. Made quite a difference.

Going back earlier. You said then that the General's (Marshall's) great contribution at .....? was this preparing them for actual field experience. A. I would say so, and nobody realized it at the time. His simplicity and making everything as simple as possible. This was his most impressive characteristic at this period. It's difficult to say what is. I think he was trying to inspire every fellow to do the very best he could to prepare himself for whatever might come.

He did want the army, relatively small, to have as good training as possible.

I saw him again before 1936. I went to Ft. Riley In 1929 and come back in 1930. I was with him again in 1936. I was the Adj. of the 4th Inf. which was stationed at Spokane. He was commanding a brigade in the 3<sup>rd</sup> division. He was over the regiment I was in. He came over and

inspected us, and when we went on maneuvers, we were under his direct command. How did he handle his inspections? He wasn't particularly interested in inspecting barracks.

Administratively, he wanted to see how people in the field were able to estimate the terrain, and how much people knew about taking advantage of the terrain. That's what I would call it mostly--taking advantage of the terrain, for whatever job they had to do. He did not have, to his knowledge, stock questions which he would ask so that we could get ready for them. You never knew to whom he was going to ask the question--he might ask an officer, or he might ask some sergeant. Whoever he asked is the man who had to answer the question--he didn't want anybody to help him or anybody like that.

Dr. Pogue: I gather he always made it a point to talk to one or two of the junior officers and, if possible, one or two of the better prepared sergeants. Answer: He always did when he came to our unit. Pogue: As chief of staff, he would send word, "Now I want to meet one or two of your junior officer and one or two of your sergeants. I guess he would go straight to them, because he said he like people to come along and tell him about these people too?"

Pogue : I've heard it said that he (Marshall) spent more time with C.C.C. business out here than he did with the units. Do you think that this is true?

Answer: I don't think I would be able to judge that. Where I served, the Colonel, he had a C.C.C. district. And he spent a great deal of time visiting the C.C.C. camps. I would fully think that the officers who were with these Regular army units were fully capable of carrying on without too much supervision. Whereas, the C.C.C. camps were being filled; a lot of them were being moved around; they did take a lot of supervision. There was a lot of discipline involved...problems. You had to be able to handle it. Do you recall a near mutiny in Cal. or Oregon, to the south of his? No, I don't recall anything like this.

At Spokane, we only had a Reg. Hdq. and one Battalion. There was one battalion over at Missoula, Mont.; and one over at Bismarck, N.D.

Do you remember a man by the name of Hopkins? No, I don't. He was with the army, but in the C.C.C. part of it. He was with Marshall.

You mentioned the maneuvers. Wasn't that the 37<sup>th</sup>? Yes, the 37<sup>th</sup>. He was in charge of the Regular army units and there was a Nat'l Guard division against us. They were in much greater strength, and they were making an attack and he was defending.

Pogue: There were two that he was in on, where he was criticized for the way he handled one phase of it. A. Well, I do remember at a critique -- I can't remember the name of the man who made the comment, but he said that in the defense of a river line, the forces should have been up closer. But, Gen. Marshall held them back in groups for counterattack, because he didn't know from where the attack was coming. He knew that he had a larger force against them, and he wanted these people mobile back there, and he would send trucks and things so that he could rush them to the vital point, where needed. We didn't take much time - for critique -we felt that we had won the battle. (Pogue: Rommel's idea of tactics) I would say that this is the key to most

of your mobile warfare. That wasn't original with Gen. Marshall. I remember when I was at Leavenworth, that was discussed many times, pro and con.

He used WW I examples as illustrations, but I wouldn't say he said that they were the best examples/methods. He wanted to get what was good out of the old war.

In the light of your consequent knowledge, was it your impression that he did a pretty good job as a brigade commander? Yes, I thought he was just tops. He didn't interfere with his commanders. He told them what to do, and then he expected them to do it. He came around if he didn't like it, he let it be known that he didn't stand around and try to tell people what to do. He never was the type to jump up and down and swear. He was very quiet, but I think he could easily convey his displeasure without .....?

Pogue: He was a very mellow, quiet man when I talked with him .....? (Here the tape becomes garbled and the conversation ceases to be recorded.)

[No conversation on opposite side of tape.]