

Notes 180N, Copy 2

Maj. Gen. Fred L. Walker

Arlington, Virginia

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Interview with Major General Fred L. Walker at his home in Arlington, October 8, 1958, by Forrest C. Pogue.

(These are merely notes which indicate something of what General Walker said to me.)

I was Lear's chief of operations when he first went to Memphis. I remember one morning going around to his office. His aide stopped me from going in, but I could hear him on the telephone. He was talking about the yoo-hoo incident. General Marshall was talking to him. General Lear said "Well, George, if I am going to command this Army, you are going to have to let me handle this matter my way."

We talked of General Walker's service in the Philippine Islands with Lt. Marshall, Lt. Arnold, Lt. Hodges and others. A number of the officers of that period later became generals. He felt that Gen Marshall got his favorable impressions of a number of men he pushed later from this period. He thinks that he may have been in the same company with Hodges and perhaps with Arnold. Marshall and Hodges hunted a great deal together. He thinks Hodges rise may have been due in part to this connection. Is a good friend of Hodges, but Hodges never pretended to be any deep student. Remembers that once he said that he was somewhat dumb and that he didn't expect a good grade at the War College.

Walker not a West Pointer. Went to Ohio State. Commissioned some 10 or 11 years after Marshall. About 1934-36 was at the War College--Gen Simonds was the head School's purpose was to instruct officers in the problems of high command. (Walker was on the staff). The method of instruction at the Army War College was to present war situations to the students. There would be a declaration of war under certain assumptions. This was handed to the students. Organized in groups, they would operate like the commander, his staff and his subordinate commanders. They would be given the existing conditions and existing types of equipment. They were assigned the available troops. The instructors acted as umpires. When it was all over orders would be issued, estimates drawn up, troops that were used would be listed, and all of this put together in a study. Students were required to present this on the stage before the others who would criticize. Sometimes this material was sent to the War Dept for study. I know that we studied the defense of the Philippines while MacArthur was still Chief of Staff. We proposed and discussed the island hopping return to the Philippines. MacArthur could have known of our recommendations at the War College while he was Chief of Staff. At least the concept of island hopping was discussed there.

In our various studies of the defense of the Philippine Islands in the 1912-15 period and at the War College, we thought it would be the Japanese against whom we would have to defend. The concept--at the War College--of the defense against the Japanese was that the Philippine garrison would have to be sacrificed because the nation could not support it in time. It was thought that we could set up areas in the Philippine Islands (perhaps the southern ones) or in the East Indies from which we could return eventually after forces were built up.

In 1937 I went to China with the 15th Infantry. I passed through Manila where Courtney Hodges was MacArthur's chief of operations. He asked me to go to his office and discuss war plans (I worked a lot on the Orient so they sent me to Italy to command). He asked what I thought of

their plans. It consisted pretty much in (1) withdrawal to Corregidor and the southern part of Luzon in the initial stages of attack by the Japanese and (2) an effort on the part of the remainder of the force in the Philippines to create a Philippine army which would either come to Luzon or be evacuated to other parts of the islands to prolong resistance in the hope they would be reinforced in time. Cooperation to be built up with force in southern part of the islands. It was assumed that the point of landing by the Japanese would be the Lingayen Gulf. As I observed operations later, I could see they were following this plan in general. However, Gen McArthur's effort was to build up his force in Australia rather than the southern islands. As I have said the concept of island hopping or jumping was not a new concept; it had been used in the Philippines.

All of this is discussed because it goes back to our maneuvers around 1912-14 in the Philippines. Always there we thought of the Japanese. With the little force we had, we hoped to put up the best force we could. There was an idea of retiring to Corregidor then. Actually conducted such a maneuver. Retired with some of the force down the Bataan Peninsula. We went through the process of preparing defenses (old Spanish defenses were useless). We transported from Manila to Corregidor supplies sufficient to maintain the garrison for six months, I believe.

In the maneuver Marshall was on the staff of the commanding general and I believe he had a great deal to do with planning for the defense and retreat down the Bataan Peninsula. Lt. Marshall and Captain Jens Bugge were both on the staff of the commanding general at this period. I always had a high degree of admiration for Bugge's ability as a strategist. He took great pride in his work; he studied the work of foreign armies. He and Marshall were associated together. The maneuver planning was a credit to both. He thinks Marshall was fortunate in having an opportunity to act on the staff when he was a very young officer. Thinks Bugge's confidence in him led Booth to use Marshall. Booth may have known Marshall at Leavenworth. The fact that a young man--still a lieutenant--was used in a staff position made him stand out. Was remembered by many officers.

At that time it was a generally accepted custom in the service that a lieutenant should be seen and not heard. To older persons to find a lieutenant in a place of responsibility such as he exercised at that time made an indelible impression on their minds and made them say this man is outstanding.

I said he had made an impression as a student and instructor at Leavenworth. He said yes, older men often didn't want to go to Leavenworth. Some were sent there as a sort of punishment. Fact that he had an opportunity to go as a lieutenant made him a marked man. The course wasn't unduly hard, but the fact that he worked hard and then became an instructor as a lieutenant made him looked upon as out-standing. Lieutenants just didn't go there. Marshall worked and applied himself. Many others went who didn't care much about the school. But Marshall applied himself and stood out.

He always applied himself. He could be stubborn and sarcastic. If he had given a lot of thought to a problem and had worked out what he considered to be right. He didn't like others to criticize in a manner he considered groundless. He could show considerable impatience and disgust. He could get pretty riled up. I recall an incident, embarrassing to me, in the Philippines. He was

instructor in topography--the subject he had taught at Leavenworth. In discussing some problem, it was not clear to me what the procedure should be. I asked a question; he gave me the answer. I proceeded to argue with him--I was a little at sea. He gave me a discussion which supported his previous answer. I still was not convinced. He let me talk. Then he just looked at me and said nothing. I finally sat down. I said I understood he could freeze people with a look. Gen W. said yes.

I recall at Ft. Lewis when we were having maneuvers. I was the executive officer of the 15th Infantry and had prepared a maneuver which he came up to witness. He asked me to come to his quarters and brief him. I brought an outline in writing and took it along. He asked to see it. He blue penciled it a good bit and said it is all right the way it is. He didn't discuss it and didn't talk at all. He was impatient of long explanations. He didn't like to discuss at random. He liked to talk socially, but if people came in to talk about something he got impatient if they were not prepared. He was pleasant to talk with socially.

I remember a little incident which is connected indirectly with Gen Marshall which occurred when I was commandant at Ft. Benning. This would be the spring of 1945 after I had returned from commanding the 36th Infantry in Italy. I got a call from General Marshall's office that a Russian general--G-3 of Russian General Staff--was coming down to visit the Infantry School and would arrive at 9:30 A. M. I turned out the band and guard of honor and went down to receive him. No one showed up. I waited for an hour. Then since Gen Lear was on the post, I felt I should join him. I left Perrine to look for the Russians. Lear said this was OK and to stay with him. Perrine had all his leads out to see when the Russians arrived. About 4 in the afternoon, the plane arrived. There was no guard of honor or band or anyone to meet them. When I came in with Lear, Perrine told me that they had arrived. Lear said don't worry--give them cocktails and a dinner and take them to a baseball game. After the ball game Lear and I went to the officers club. During the dinner I said to Lear how shall I seat you. He said my three stars outrank his two, so I will sit at your right and he to my right. I could hear Lear all evening giving the Russian advice on how to handle his armies and his campaigns. They had several cocktails, so I thought it was all right. Lear was talking in a serious vein, but the Russian was serious. Lear had tried to explain baseball earlier, but had no success.

Next morning my telephone rang early and my aide said the Russians were angry and were leaving before breakfast. I said that won't do. I rushed over and got them to stay for breakfast. It was before the breakfast hour and it was the most horrible breakfast I ever ate in my life--a sad affair. The Russians went away displeased. I told Lear and he said don't worry. I will go back to Washington and explain to George and he will understand. That afternoon General Marshall's office asked me to explain in writing what happened. My explanation got there about the same time Gen Lear did. He must have explained to George because I heard nothing more.

I recall that Gen Marshall came to Italy. He and Clark and Devers came to see me once. We had just occupied new ground and I didn't know where all my units were, but I explained from the map. I asked if he wanted to go forward. He said yes. Then I asked if he wanted to go with him. He said no. It disappointed me, naturally, but it worked out all right. He didn't want anyone along handing him a line. He visited me three times I think. He sent me a nice cable for breaking the line at Vallettri just before going into Rome.

Once when he came to see my unit in Florida, we had a review. I sat next to him at luncheon. He had Sir John Dill with him and gave most of his attention to Sir John. During the luncheon--which I shall never forget--he said to me "Walker I always think of you as a lieutenant." Of course, he meant that was the way he remembered me from the Ph days, but I was a little taken aback. I wanted to be thought of as a general by the Chief of Staff.

He was always terse in discussion with me in Italy about the tactical situation. He would come right out with questions. You would explain and would get no reactions. Then another question unrelated. You never knew whether he agreed or disagreed.

As a lieutenant he was always terse and short. Like in the class I mentioned--he didn't intend to waste any time. It was a habit with him. It is a big advantage for a man to have the ability to transact business rapidly that way.

He was strong in his likes and dislikes. If he disliked someone, it meant that the man could do no good. If he liked him, he would support him in difficult spots. I said I had been told, however, that he would lean over backward not to mistreat someone he disliked. He said he was positive that this was true.

We talked of officers he had pushed because he liked them. I mentioned Terry Allen. He said yes, he pushed Terry. Terry was likable but not fitted for command above regimental level. A dashing officer. Gen Marshall pushed him, protected him, and gave him a second division after he nearly ruined the 1st Division. Agreed that Alled and Teddy Roosevelt alike. Mentioned case when 1st Division and Walker's unit had a party together. Allen and TR got high and got into a wrestling match in the middle of the floor of the officers club. Both fell in the floor. Embarrassed everyone but those two.

Mentioned Patton. Said he never liked Patton. Terrible in use of profanity and obscenity. Thinks Gen Marshall didn't know him well. Says he thinks Eisenhower would have shipped him over the slapping incident, but that Patton was a good friend of Mrs. Roosevelt and the President and Eisenhower didn't dare. Patton could change in a moment from crying like a baby to swearing horribly. Cut people to pieces with his tongue. Could quote scripture when he wanted to.

Remembers once Patton saw a chaplain with buttons unbuttoned or something. For once he didn't scream at the man but came in and called the Chief of Staff and told him what to tell chaplain. Full of oaths and obscenity. Chief of Staff naturally didn't tell him.

Remember once up in Mass. I assembled officers for a talk by Patton. He talked about 25 minutes. As I sat and watched their faces, I could see surprise and resentment in their faces. All through then was vulgarity, profanity, bloodshed. They were comments a gentlemen doesn't make before other gentlemen. My aide on going back to our quarters said General I think Gen Patton is crazy. Lots of my officers thought he was not mentally all there. Yet now officers and men who served under him idolized him. His staff actually protected him. Saw that his instructions were modified.

Staffs have to protect. I remember Bedell Smith and Eisenhower and Clark came to see near San Petro. Eisenhower said to me, I would like to see an artillery concentration on that town to see what it looks like. I turned to send the word to the artillery and Bedell took me by the arm and said don't pay any attention to what he said. Forget it. It was Silly. I thought so and so did Bedell, but he was free to act.

Said Patton dramatized forgetting food so he could drive, but not sensible.

Army staffs are set up nowadays so that a general virtually can't make a mistake.

Comments on retirement: In the service all of your relationships are on the basis of absolute truth. All reports must be truthful. You get into the habit of accepting statements as reliable and truthful. I had to relearn a lot of things in retirement.

Earlier he said that he had helped plan Louisiana maneuvers--1941--as Lear's chief of operations. Then was in 2d Div on other side. Says Lear's maneuver not well ran. Thinks he did not pick a good chief of operations.