

was never taught or gained in engineering training. Do you think Lane's appraisal is correct?

A: I think generally so, yes. In World War I the divisions in combat were just stuck in solid trench warfare-not a war of movement and so on. And of course, they had the Service of Supply in the rear. But the operations of the latter were mainly building up depots, construction of depots, operation of railroads, forestry operations, and so on. But you had no such thing as task forces.

During a war of movement you had to build and maintain supply roads, provide utilities, in addition to the combat engineer phase. But in World War I they certainly had nothing like the airdrome systems we had to provide and maintain in World War II. Those senior commands and headquarters who were thinking in terms of what had happened during World War I were far out-of-date compared to what the needs and requirements and problems were going to be under the situation which obtained in World War II, and particularly in a jungle theater and unimproved and undeveloped theater such as we had in the Southwest Pacific. They just had not had the opportunity to experience or apparently even visualize what those requirements would be.

Army Service Command and Return to the Philippines

Q: What were your primary considerations for the establishment of the Army Service Command (ASCOM) in July 1944?

A: It wasn't my idea to set it up. But General Steve Chamberlain was our G-3 operations chief on our GHQ headquarters staff. And he was ideally qualified to be G-3 chief of operations because-not because he was a tactical specialist, but he had been a logistics specialist. I think he had been in our G-4 general staff in Washington. So he had an appreciation and a concept of logistic problems attendant with all of our operations.

He had a special understanding of the need for engineers and supported me particularly in connection with filling our engineer requirements.



Major General R. J. Marshall, Major General Spencer B. Akin, Brigadier General Marquat, Brigadier General Charles A. Willoughby, General Douglas A. MacArthur, Major General Steven J. Chamberlain, Brigadier General Hugh J. Casey, Brigadier General Hanford MacNider, Brigadier General Lester J. Whitlock, Brigadier General Bonner Frank Fellers.

He indicated to General MacArthur and to the chief of staff that he thought the critical problem associated with the projected invasion of the Philippines with major forces would be the logistics phase. He recommended that an Army service command be set up to be attached to Sixth Army with the special function of handling all the construction, logistics, transportation, supply, and so on. It was based on that that they organized such a command. He also unfortunately recommended that I be the commanding general. I would have much preferred to have remained as chief engineer.

Q: Did your appointment as commander of ASCOM pose any difficulties for you? Essentially, you were still the chief engineer of the Southwest Pacific.

A: Yes, but my deputy, Jack Sverdrup, then became acting chief.

Q: He was acting chief. And yet you came under the USASOS and then Sixth Army, which nominally were under your technical direction for engineering purposes. Did that confuse the situation any?

A: No, no. It was understandable that ASCOM would operate under USASOS during the period of organization because it was necessary for me to get, in addition to our engineers, quartermaster corps, medical personnel, transportation personnel, signal personnel, and so on to handle the varied functions, the service functions of this new command. We worked with Frink readily and very well in setting up that organization prior to our transfer to Sixth Army when we were actually to join them prior to this advance, prior to these projected operations.

Leyte and Luzon Invasions

Q: For the major operations in Leyte, it appeared that you were going to have sufficient time, for possibly the first time in the theater, to develop plans for engineer operations and for base construction. Then the projected invasion date was jumped ahead two months to October. How much did this disrupt your planning?

A: Untold problems. First of all, advancing up to then was putting us right into the middle of the rainy season with all the problems that that was going to bring about. The other thing—and this was a very vital deficiency—by reason of this foolish setup that the War Department had, we had to submit the overall supply project and get it approved. Based on that approval, you requisitioned backup supplies. They were finally approved; and then they were projected to come to us in time for this Leyte invasion, which was to occur later.