

A: **Yes**, Conway knew what had gone on in the 92d Division and knew of my experience with the ill-fated Cinquale Canal operation. When Conway took command of the 82d Division he brought into the division two assistants. I was the youngest brigadier general in the Army. The other assistant division commander, Bruce Palmer, was the most senior brigadier general in the Army.

I became the assistant division commander for support. General Conway had a rotation policy. After a year, if the junior general did well at logistics, he would take over the job of operations. Accordingly, after a year Conway moved me up to become the assistant division commander for operations.

This move was prejudicial to Bruce Palmer, but he accepted it with grace. We have remained friends over the years. General Conway was a very energetic and innovative officer-one of the most imaginative officers I have ever known. He was a fanatic when it came to physical fitness and insisted that his officers set an example for their men. You may have heard about his famous Winged-Foot Society which sponsored a 10-mile run every New Year's Day. He believed that his officers should not sit around and watch TV and drink beer, but instead run a ten-mile race on the holiday. We not only benefitted from running but from the fact that we had to train for the race and therefore drank little, if at all, on New Year's Eve.

Member, Howze Board

A month or so after becoming the assistant division commander for operations, I was shifted over to work for General Howze, who commanded the 18th Airborne Corps at Bragg. The Department of Defense, unhappy that the Army was not moving rapidly enough to capitalize on the advances in aviation technology, especially in the helicopter field, issued a memorandum to the Secretary of the Army.

It wanted a bold "new look" at land warfare mobility and firepower. The Department of Defense directed that the Army examine how to substitute air mobile systems for traditional ground systems. That gave rise to General Howze forming the famous "Howze Board" of which I was made his director of tests. This amounted to my wearing a second hat since I kept the job of assistant division commander for operations in the 82d Airborne Division.

This didn't sit too well with General Conway since General Howze employed most of the troops of the 82d Airborne Division to carry out his tests. Generals Conway and Palmer, in effect, became administrators and housekeepers for the troops. For

all intents and purposes, General Howze actually commanded the troops of the 82d Airborne through me as his director of tests.

Q: What kind of tests did Howze carry out?

A: General Howze was given authority from the Secretary of the Army to assemble all of the Army's helicopters from the United States at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. We tested helicopters in nuclear situations, in "sky cavalry" roles for land warfare, and in counterinsurgency operations.

This first-named role was a concept I had developed when I was an instructor at the Infantry School in 1952. The notion was to simulate dropping an atomic weapon in the enemy's rear. While the enemy was still stunned, our troopers were to hop out of their helicopters into the area where the burst had occurred. They were to wear protective suits to protect them from the radiation of the atomic burst. At Benning I had called this the "swarm of bees" concept.

The second idea was to use helicopters in air cavalry roles. We were to do with helicopters the kind of things General Stonewall Jackson had done in the Civil War with horse cavalry and General Patton had done in World War II with tanks. The Army had gotten too laden down with equipment and we wanted to see if we could make Army units lighter and thus more mobile.

The third concept we worked on was how one might use helicopters in counterinsurgency operations. This was becoming popular because we were at that time in the early stages of the Vietnam War. I had experimented with this type of operation in Korea. As a result, the largest segment of our tests had to do with how best to use regular troops in irregular counterinsurgency operations.

Our tests proved beyond a doubt that the use of helicopters in counterinsurgency was here to stay. But the concept became highly controversial from the beginning. General Howze recommended that the Army form five air assault divisions, three air cavalry combat brigades, and five air transport brigades. This was an unpopular idea in the Pentagon because the people around the chief of staff of the Army were, for the most part, armor officers. They felt that every helicopter introduced into the Army would mean one less tank. As a result, they opposed the concept.

Moreover, the Air Force and the Navy vigorously fought the concept. The Air Force felt that helicopters were usurping their mission of close air support. The Navy believed the air mobility concept spelled the death of aircraft carriers, that helicopters would replace carrier-based aircraft. General Earle "Bus" Wheeler,

an Army general, had become chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He wanted to be popular with the other services and said he would be “objective- in the roles and missions fight. As a result, he backed the Air Force and Navy. His protege, General Harold K. Johnson, replaced Wheeler as the chief of staff of the Army and followed in his footsteps. Besides, many of Johnson’s best friends were armor officers who opposed air mobility. Nevertheless, a number of highly professional and courageous officers continued to back the concept. Given the unpopularity of air mobility in the Army, they did so at considerable risk to their careers. I refer to officers like Jack Norton, Harry Kinnard, Jack Tolson, Bob Williams, Bill Terrell, and others.

Q: Didn’t President Kennedy pay the 82d Airborne a visit at about that time?

A: Yes, President Kennedy came to Fort Bragg to inspect the division for a check on our state of readiness and to get a briefing on the air-mobility tests. General Conway, as I mentioned, was a highly imaginative officer. He divided the division into five groups, each group in a different uniform to show how versatile the division was to take on assignments in any part of the globe. One group was in standard fatigues, ready to fight in Europe. A second group was in jungle camouflage fatigues, ready to deploy to Vietnam. A third group was in desert camouflage fatigues, ready to go to a desert operation, A fourth group was in winter uniforms, the kind we dressed in during the Korean War. And the fifth group was dressed in white ski suits and carried skis, showing that we were ready to fight in the Arctic. It was a hot day and those dressed in jungle or desert suits were quite comfortable. However, the groups dressed in winter clothing were very uncomfortable. General Bruce Palmer, with his face made up with camouflage paint, was the commander of troops. One of his proudest moments was to have his photo taken with President Kennedy and have it splashed across the U.S. papers.

One of the interesting events was that Conway quickly chartered a commercial plane and within several hours after the President returned to Washington, he personally delivered the fur coat Mrs. Kennedy had forgotten. He also presented her with 50 long-stemmed American Beauty roses, representing the 50 states of the 82d, “All American” Division. When General Conway was promoted a year or so later, we chided him on having used this incident to get him a third star.

The air-mobility tests proved to be highly fascinating. We not only had a fine group of officers to work with, but were fortunate in having General Howze leading us. Howze was very energetic, a helicopter pilot and a Civil War buff. He was ideally suited for the job. We were also fortunate that General Art Trudeau was the chief of the Army’s research and development division. Trudeau

was highly imaginative, especially in developing equipment for us. For example, instead of having troopers slide down ropes into simulated jungles, Trudeau devised a device resembling a roller shade. When a trooper was ready to get back into the helicopter, he simply tugged on the rope attached to his harness and up he went. Another of Trudeau's ideas was to blow a hole in the jungle canopy by using explosives. A helicopter wishing to land in the jungle would first drop a large charge of explosives. After the explosive charge went off, troopers would descend into the area with chain saws, cutting down any trees which might still be standing. Within a few minutes, a landing area would be ready to receive a helicopter.

The imaginative spirit caught on quickly and other officers began to dream up concepts and gadgets for us to test. One set of ideas came from General Andrew P. O'Meara. He was not a member of the Howze Board but followed our activities closely. He believed that there was a possibility that the U.S. would get into a nuclear war and that helicopters were ideally suited for use in conjunction with tactical nuclear weapons. Once a week we would put on a show to which we invited officers and civilians from the Pentagon. I remember particularly one demonstration that we put on for Secretary McNamara and his civilian whiz kids, because of an accident involving one of the Army's fixed-wing logistical airplanes.

Q: Was this the Caribou?

A: **Yes. The Caribou was** a rugged fixed-wing aircraft which could take off and land from fields or cow pastures. We had several of these Caribou outfitted with bladders carrying helicopter fuel. The idea was to turn it into a roving filling station. The plan was to have a Caribou, loaded with fuel, land in the middle of a cow pasture. Five troopers would jump out and extend hoses to five points on a star. The helicopters would then land and be refueled at each of the stations. To gain surprise, the Caribou, like the helicopters themselves, would fly the nap of the earth and come in right over the tree tops. In this way they avoided detection by radar. They would come into an area so quickly that the enemy wouldn't see or hear them until it was too late to react.

In preparation for McNamara's visit we had practiced the exercise four or five times. Each time, the Caribou would come in a bit lower. The final rehearsal was perfect, the Caribou flew in just a few feet above the tree tops. During the exercise, I was standing next to Secretary McNamara when the Caribou, having come in too low, caught the tops of the trees and crashed right in front of us. Fortunately, the fuel did not explode or catch fire and no one was killed. But it had been a close call. A few minutes later the five helicopters arrived and we had to describe to the secretary what would have happened had the Caribou not

crashed. All was not lost, however, because the helicopters were able to show their versatility and take the wounded pilot and other crew members to the hospital.

It was a rather disastrous day for McNamara. After he left us he went aboard an aircraft carrier which was involved in another accident. A plane about to land on the carrier lost one of its bombs which came loose. It skidded along the deck, narrowly missing the secretary. One of the whiz kids reportedly quipped that he should get combat pay for attending military demonstrations.

The Howze Board tests were a lot of fun, but they also involved a lot of hard work. We not only had to write and execute the tests, but had umpires evaluate them. Unfortunately, the tests were conducted in the days before there were video cameras. Nevertheless, we documented the tests with still and moving pictures. We then critiqued the tests and wrote our final reports. Based on these reports General Howze and his board of officers wrote their conclusions and made recommendations to the Secretary of the Army. As a result of these recommendations an air assault division was subsequently formed to take its place in the Vietnam War.

Chief, Army Concept Team, Vietnam

Q: Ambassador Rowny, after the Howze Board tests were finished, where did you go from there?

A: While the Howze Board was putting together its final report, I was elated to learn I had been selected for a second star. I was assigned to Korea to become the commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division. I was particularly pleased on two counts. First, that I had been selected for promotion after having been a brigadier general for only a year. Second, that I would be allowed to put on my two stars and command the division while waiting for my number to come up on the promotion list.

I wound up my work with the Howze Board on a Friday afternoon and drove up to Washington on Saturday. The moving van would arrive on Sunday and begin unloading our household goods on Monday morning. Early Monday I was awaiting the moving van when a limousine drove up. The driver said he had a note for me from **Cyrus R. Vance**, Secretary of the Army. The note said that the secretary had tried to get in touch with me over the weekend but couldn't do so because my phone was not hooked up. He asked me to get into his limousine and come have breakfast with him. You can imagine that my decision to do so was not a very popular one with my wife.