

A: Yes, several of my West Point classmates were there. I remember one classmate in particular, Robert “Woody” Garrett. I also made lasting friendships with officers of other services, such as Captain Cy Young who got to command a nuclear submarine. He was godfather to my son John who was born at Norfolk. I made another friend, an Air Force officer, Vincent Rethman, from whom I learned a great deal about Air Force doctrine. All in all, it was an enjoyable time; the six months passed quickly.

Q: After that school assignment you were sent to Paris, first as deputy secretary of the general staff to General Gruenther and later secretary of the general staff to General Norstad. What did those jobs involve?

A: I went from a low-key assignment at Norfolk to a very high-key job in Paris. General Gruenther was highly demanding. He expected his staff to work at white heat 12 hours a day. I was motivated to work hard at this job because General Gruenther looked to the secretary of the general staff to run the entire staff. He used his chief of staff, the usual person to run the staff, as a second deputy.

Most of the officers who had been Gruenther’s secretaries of the general staff either suffered nervous breakdowns or had heart attacks. Because General Gruenther was highly demanding, it was a stressful operation. I was at first deputy to Colonel [later general] Jerry Folda. When I joined him he was close to burnout.

Q: **Did you** become the secretary of the general staff to General Gruenther?

A: Yes, after a year as his deputy I took over from Folda and became the secretary of the general staff to General Gruenther. Six months later General Norstad became SACEUR. I stayed on with him as his secretary of the general staff.

Secretary of the Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers

Q: Could you tell me what you consider as high points of your assignment in France with SHAPE [Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe]?

A: Some of the high points were procedural and others were substantive.

On the procedural side, we brought the first Germans into SHAPE. I made the original contacts with the German government, selected two officers to come to the staff and decided where to assign them. We put one in the operations directorate

and the other in my own office. Both of them rose to become chiefs of their respective services in the German armed forces. It was a time when we were branching out and bringing officers of other nationalities into key positions in SHARE. Up until this time, most of the key jobs had gone to Anglo-Americans. Now we started to bring in officers of other nationalities. For example, the logistics division went to an Italian. We brought in several French officers and arranged for other key spots to be filled by officers from the Low Countries.

On the substantive side, it was also a fascinating time, largely because we were redoing the basic strategy of NATO, MC 14/2. MC 14/2 was the document outlining the basic strategy of NATO for the 1950s, the strategy of massive retaliation. When he became SACEUR in 1955, General Norstad began to study the strategy of forward defense and flexible response. It later became MC 14/3.

In addition to changing NATO strategy, we were also faced with international crises. One was the Suez Canal crisis, which involved all of NATO but particularly the British and French.

A second crisis was the invasion of Hungary by the Soviets. I recall that quite distinctly because General Gruenther was called hourly by Clare Booth Luce, our ambassador to Italy. She was highly disturbed and wanted him to do something to help Hungary. Her main idea was to have U.S. troops move into Hungary to reinforce the Hungarian resistance. Failing that, she wanted U.S. troops to move to the Hungarian border. And, at the very least, she wanted Gruenther to have Red Cross supplies flown into Hungary. But Gruenther was unable to get Washington to move on any of these ideas. At first, they said it wasn't a NATO responsibility. And later they said the U.S. should not interfere in Hungary's internal affairs.

A third crisis at NATO was General de Gaulle's return to power in France. We worked very closely with our French contacts and wondered how things would sort out. It was fortunate that we had a French officer, General Allard, at the head of our operations division. He was a personal friend of General de Gaulle's who had served with him in Algeria. Through Allard we were able to keep in close touch with what was going on politically in France. This paved the way for amicable relations with General de Gaulle when he came back into power.

Q: What was General Gruenther's background?

A: I had come to know General Gruenther in Italy during World War II when he was chief of staff to General Mark Clark in the Fifth Army. After the war, General Gruenther went back to Washington on the War Department staff. He was in on the ground floor to set up NATO. He took Colonels Goodpaster and Robert Wood

to Europe with him at the time the Marshall Plan was being drawn up. He sowed the seeds for what later became the political and military policies of NATO. Gruenther rose rapidly in the Army, moving from one staff job to another. He was brilliant and worked very hard. However, he worked his subordinates even harder.

Q: Can you give me some personal insights into your tour at SHAPE?

A: General Gruenther was a Class A, high-pressure type of boss. He loved to give the impression that everything he did was smooth and easy, that he had total recall, and that he was a superman. Although he was a brilliant officer, he was no superman. What most people don't know is that he did a great deal of preplanning and spent a prodigious amount of time attending to details.

Gruenther had a habit of waking up at night whenever he had an idea and dictating a half dozen or more so-called "Gruenther-grams." We would pick up the Gruenther-grams at his residence when he came down to breakfast. By the time he came to the office, he expected us to have answers to his questions and plans for those things he wanted done. These Gruenther-grams became a major source of our heartburn. He expected us to spring into action immediately and produce instant results. He left nothing to chance, everything had to be checked and double-checked.

I remember particularly a Gruenther-gram on General Gruenther's last day on the job at SHAPE. The Suez crisis was still not settled, causing us a great deal of work. We received a Gruenther-gram about 0630 which read: "By the time I arrive in the office at 0830, I want a plan on how to dispose of my toys." A famous toy manufacturer, Marx, admired Gruenther greatly and over the years gave him hundreds of toys.

We quickly went to work and devised a basic plan. It would allot toys on a priority basis first to the children of enlisted men, then to civilians, and finally to officers. It would give the highest priority to children of officers of the smaller countries, all worked out on a point system. No toys would go to Americans.

General Gruenther looked over the plan and said, "This is pretty good. You're finally learning how to operate around here. However," he said, "you've made some assumptions I don't understand. You've developed one plan on the assumption that there are 500 toys, another on the assumption that there are 1,000 toys and a third on the assumption that we have 1,500 toys to distribute. Why three plans? Don't you know how many toys we have?"

"No," I said, "we don't."

"G-damn it," he exploded, "Why don't you find out?"

"Because," I said, "I couldn't." One was never allowed to say much to Gruenther; he wanted only answers to his questions.

"Why not" he asked.

"Because," I said, "Mrs Gruenther has the keys to the attic where the toys are locked up. She says that they are her toys."

Gruenther got quite annoyed: "They're not her toys, they're my toys. She wants to give them to charity. But charity begins at home," he said. "We have to give them to children of those who have served at SHAPE. The poor we will always have with us," he said, "but there will only be one NATO."

I needed to get out of the middle of this one and asked Mrs. Gruenther to let me count the toys. I said I would draw up a plan whereby she got half and General Gruenther got the other half. She readily agreed, but General Gruenther only agreed reluctantly. There were 800 toys. She got 400 for her charities, and General Gruenther got 400 for NATO.

By 11 a.m. we had developed a plan which General Gruenther approved, saying he wanted the toys delivered later that day. General Gruenther personally wrote notes in five different languages to the parents of the children. We left the office at midnight, exhausted, having gotten most of the toys distributed. We didn't have the nerve to tell him that some of the recipients were not at home. I told this story to my wife, who became quite annoyed with me. "With all the other things you have to do of a serious nature," she said, "why are you wearing yourself and your staff out on trivial matters?"

The next day was a Sunday. As we were returning home from church, General Gruenther's driver drove up with a big box. With it was a note addressed to my wife: "Dear Rita: Your husband worked very hard on the plan for distributing toys to my wonderful people of SHAPE. I gave none to the Americans, but for Marcia, age six, is a doll, and for Peter, age four, is a train, and for Paul, age two, is a set of building blocks."

My wife beamed and said: "Isn't he wonderful?" It was my turn to be annoyed with her. I later learned that our three toys had come out of Mrs. Gruenther's quota for her charities.

General Robert J. "Bob" Wood, one of my predecessors as secretary of the general staff, kept a collection of some of the more interesting Gruenther-grams. One

dealt with a letter delivered to the prime minister of Turkey in Ankara eight hours after the time it was signed. That took considerable doing. Another was a letter personally delivered by me to the chairman of the British chiefs of staff.

This would have not been too difficult had it not been for the unexpected closure of the British military airfield near London. I was dropped off at an airport 60 miles from London at 10:30 a.m. and was to deliver the letter at noon. I had to commandeer a British Army vehicle, "in the name of the Supreme Allied Commander," to drive me to London.



Edward and Rita Rownv 20 April 1985.

I arrived at high noon, the time the letter was to be delivered, just as the changing of the guards began. I ran through the ranks of the guards to deliver my letter to the chairman of the British chiefs. He didn't expect me to arrive on time after he heard that the airport had been closed. He complimented me on my "Yankee ingenuity- for commandeering the British vehicle.

Another humorous incident I recall was when General Gruenther came in one morning and saw that not all of the 14 NATO flags were up. One flag was stuck several feet below the top of the mast. He called in Colonel Wood, then secretary of the general staff, and said, "When I came in this morning, I noticed that one of the flags was not fully up at the top of the mast. I expect the secretary of the general staff personally to supervise these important things."

Colonel Wood answered, "Sir, at the time we have to come to work, it's not yet reveille and the flags have not yet been hoisted."⁹

Q: Gruenther, I take it, took over the American Red Cross. Who had to adjust to the other-Gruenther or the Red Cross?

A: I heard that Gruenther had to adjust. The people at Red Cross told him they worked for salaries and not for promotions. He started out demanding that things be done instantly and correctly. But he soon had to scale down his expectations. The Red Cross staff just didn't respond to his Gruenther-grams. They didn't mind working on real substantive issues, but they rebelled at working on things which they felt only inflated Gruenther's ego and maintained his "superman" reputation.

We spent an enormous amount of time on Gruenther's speeches. A major speech would call for three to four weeks of staff work by several officers of the secretariat. Gruenther wanted to know exactly how many people would be in the audience, what their backgrounds were, and what questions they were likely to ask. We would send an officer to the scene of the speech a week in advance to do research on the spot, read local papers to get the "feel" of the place, and so on.

Gruenther would always go armed with gifts for those he expected to meet. We researched these matters carefully, but he would make it appear spontaneous. For example, on a visit to Canada he said: "Prime Minister Trudeau, the last time I saw you was on July 16th of 1950." He not only had a gift for Trudeau and his wife, but for their children and grandchildren. He'd say, "Here's a toy for your granddaughter, Jennifer, who must be about six, and here's a toy for your driver's son, John, who must be about four." All of this was painstakingly orchestrated but done surreptitiously behind the scenes to make it look unpremeditated and spontaneous. It was phony, and at times corny, but it paid off, they loved it.

Gruenther was best with large audiences but uncomfortable when he spoke to one or two people. If he had an audience of 100 or 200 people, it turned him on and he would come alive. He was a great actor and loved to play to crowds, the larger the better.

General Norstad was just the opposite. He was low-key, shy, thoughtful, and reflective. He didn't care much for grandstanding. The smaller the audience, the better he performed. When he spoke to a large crowd, he was nervous, but when he spoke to only a few persons he was more comfortable. He was most comfortable in a one-n-one situation. Although he and Gruenther were opposites, each was effective in his own way. Norstad didn't write "Norstad-grams" He would write out instructions to the staff and explain in great detail what he wanted.

Q: When General Norstad became SACEUR, did you have any of the type of meetings you had back in the Pentagon where you got together and talked about the future?

A: Yes, Norstad continued his dream sessions. One of the subjects we discussed, a brainchild of Norstad's, was the evolution of NATO strategy from massive retaliation to flexible response. Updating MC 14/2 to MC 14/3 was worked out in detail by Colonel Richard "Dick" Stilwell, who later commanded our forces in Korea as a four-star general. Norstad was a young and dynamic officer. I recall he celebrated his 50th birthday while I was his secretary. He was an inspiring man to work for and employed none of the high pressure tactics that General Gruenther used.

Q: General Norstad must have ushered in a completely different atmosphere.

A: Yes. As I said earlier, the two SACEURs were effective but in different ways-General Gruenther was effective with large audiences while Norstad was effective with small ones. Gruenther believed that strategy would take care of itself. He felt it was his job to look after the support for and morale within NATO. Gruenther felt it important to have all the countries, and especially the smaller ones, feel secure by being a part of one big family.

By way of contrast, General Norstad believed that if he developed a good strategy, it was the best thing he could do for NATO. He felt his subordinates could take care of details and could take charge of their own morale.

Q: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your assignment at **SHAPE**?

A: Yes. While at SHAPE I got interested in how decisions are made at high levels. There were a number of studies being done in academia, especially Harvard and Yale, on the decision-making process. Some of the ideas developed at that time were applied later on, for example at the time of the Cuban missile crisis. The decision-making process fascinated me, and I started gathering notes for what culminated about 20 years later as my Ph.D. thesis on decision-making in NATO.

In my Ph.D. thesis on the decision-making process in NATO, I drew largely from my notes taken at tours of duty then, and later, at NATO. I wrote that there were three types of decisions made in NATO.

The easiest type of decisions were those that had to be made in times of crisis. I learned this at first hand because during my first months in Brussels in 1970, I was the deputy to General Johannes Steinhoff, commander of NATO's Military Committee. Dom Mintoff, the prime minister of Malta, had Malta defect from NATO the day I arrived in Brussels in 1970. On that same day, Steinhoff left for a month's leave. The month of August is a dead month all over Europe. Yet,

during that month of August we had something like 20 high-level meetings on the Malta crisis which I chaired. I complained at the time that I had to carry the Maltese Cross.”

The second part of my thesis was on a more difficult type of decision to make: how does an organization change its basic strategy? Here, I wrote about the shift from MC 14/2 to MC 14/3 which had been initiated by General, Norstad. It took several years to complete the shift in strategy from that of massive retaliation to one of forward defense and flexible response. Although I left SHAPE before the shift was completed, I was able to assess its effectiveness during my second tour in NATO.

The third and most difficult type of decision I covered in my thesis was how an organization changes its structure to accommodate new situations. One would think that international organizations change easily and rapidly, but they don't. There's a great deal of inertia in large organizations. In fact, some things we tried mightily to change never succeeded. For example, we were never able to put together a viable public relations program for NATO.

National War College

Q: After you left SHAPE I gather you were assigned to the National War College.

A: Yes. I went to the regular course at the National War College in 1958 and finished in 1959.

Q: Was this an easy course? It seems like you were pretty experienced.

A: Yes, it was an easy course and a lot of fun. They let you set your own pace and I decided to work hard. I wrote a ten-year projection of what would happen in foreign affairs and how it would **affect** the military. I wanted to see how well one could project what might happen ten years hence. I thought that no one could, of course, predict precisely what would happen. But I believed that one could project trends and the general course of events. In retrospect, I was right. The projection held up remarkably well. It taught me that a good strategy and plan could absorb many unexpected events and still have us come out where we wanted to be.

The good news about my paper was that I tied for first prize for the class' best thesis. But the bad news was that I tied with Dr. Fritz Kraemer, a friend of long-standing. The winning papers were presented orally to the class and college alumni during their annual reunion. We flipped a coin to see who would go first