CHAPTER XI

First Constabulary Brigade

Q: We now know that you're going to Europe to command the First Constabulary Brigade in Germany, but there are always reasons why people go off to take brigades. What were some of the activities that occurred prior to this that led up to your good fortune in getting a brigade command?

A: I told you about going to Europe as Chief of Manpower Control in the summer of 1947, and that General Huebner had a great impact on some of my assignments after he once became impressed with my efforts with the Engineer Amphibian Command at Cape Cod. Apparently he still believed that I had the qualities of a combat commander. Although I was still a brigadier general, AUS, I was literally subject to control by the Chief of Engineers first. General Huebner offered me the position of Chief Engineer of the European Theater the following year. He knew it was becoming vacant, and he may have already checked to see that I would soon be assigned overseas again. On the other hand, he also said, "You ought to have a combat command over here, but you have to make up your mind what you want to do. Do you want to be the Chief of Engineers some day, or do you want to get into the line as a combat commander and go from there wherever it takes you?" I said, "That is what I want to do." So he held a brigade command open for me, the 1st Constabulary Brigade, from something around the end of 1947 until I physically arrived there in March of 1948. There were at least six officers who were pressing him hard for this job, a couple of them on his own staff, and they told me so themselves. But he said, "Nope, I'm holding that for somebody." He held it for me. So I arrived in late March and took this assignment. It was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life and it certainly opened the door to broader opportunities for me. It was an absolutely fascinating command. I told you that he had offered me a regiment in the 1st Division for the cross-channel invasion, but I hadn't been able to take it. Now this was a peacetime operation, of course. I arrived the day that the Russians moved into Czechoslovakia in 1948. Having been in Japan the year before and having spent quite a little time looking at MacArthur's troops and the way they were deployed principally for security and civil affairs jobs,

living with his officers in billets and hotels, plus my observations in Germany in 1947, when I began inspecting my brigade, I saw and sensed exactly what was happening. By and large this is what they were doing: they were raiding DP camps -- displaced persons camps -- and trying to keep them under control. They also had extensive civil affairs jobs. The third task was what I call "showing the flag," or shows of force. In other words, a motorized troop would pass over a certain route through the villages with the flags waving and the horns blaring and whatnot. As far as military training is concerned, there was very little of it over and beyond the basic training that was needed to make a soldier know that he was still a soldier and not just a civilian.

Fortunately, I was able to make some changes; I got authority and I started rotating whole units so that they could really concentrate on military training for a period. It had been over two years since they'd seen anything of this kind. I started talking about parts and not paint, so that vehicles just didn't look good, they were good. They were working better and readiness was stepped up. We did more firing on the range. We did a great deal of maneuvering, rapid movement, communications, gunnery, tying airplanes in with ground troops. We didn't have helicopters then; we had little L-5 planes and maybe other little spotter planes. I equipped them all with radios and we got to the point where all my air and ground units as they moved could communicate; well, they knew better than to lose communications. This wasn't under way more than six weeks when my brigade was given the job of distributing all the new money from the Reich Bank to the banks in Western Germany in the American zone. This was when the new money was issued, the weekend of June 22, 1948.

We had air observation over our columns all the way, and it was really quite a nice exercise in itself. General Huebner, being a great troop man, was pleased, too. From then on larger maneuvers started picking up. General Huebner ordered the first large-scale, postwar maneuvers for September at Grafenwehr, and I was selected to be the Chief Umpire. He was testing me in all sorts of jobs, and they were all fascinating. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience there.

Q: Before you go on, you mentioned that twice now and I think it's interesting. You mentioned that General MacArthur's troops were engaged in civil affairs. We talked previously about the role of the Army. It seems to me that what you are criticizing now is a role that we have attempted to take which obviously degraded the primary role; and, at a certain point in time, it starts breaking down the ability of the command to do its primary role. I have a feeling you were observing this both in the Far East and in Germany about that time. I'm also aware that the Constab was formed on 1 July 1946 with its mission as the enforcement arm of military government, which in fact became sort of a police force -- a civil affairs type thing. The reason I make this point is that it appears that we can't do two things at the same time for long. We either have to be oriented towards our power role or we have to have forces that can do the other. But we really can't do both. Am I right or wrong?

A: Both roles were important, but assigned theater strengths were inadequate. I stated that MacArthur was nearly 50 percent under even the strength allocated. That's one reason we paid such a heavy price when Korea was attacked in 1950. Except for the 1st Division, by 1947 there was no other major combat element in Europe -- well, let's say in Germany. There were a few troops in Italy and Austria but not very much, perhaps one understrength division. That shrank to nothing. The forces in Europe were reduced in 1947; the Constabulary itself went from five regiments to three. I got over there just in time six months later, the next March, to pick up the pieces of one of those regiments, and in my brigade, for instance, I ended up with only one regiment. I had a few other units and later I had several attachments. The point is that we were down to a point where you might say, except for very limited and minimal military training, we were entirely engaged in civil affairs or military government activities. When this is going to persist over any period of time, I feel there must be a hard core of "ready to hit" military forces; how big depends upon the circumstances. But some outfit should be there that is really ready to go and strike effectively if you've got a major problem facing you, even internal disturbances. These outfits were not ready. I then helped to push defense plans through, also. Planning was developing rapidly under General Huebner. General Milburn had the 1st Division;

General I. D. White had the two constabulary brigades; I commanded the 1st. Ed Sebree, and later Bruce Clarke, had the 2d. There were two regiments in the 2d Brigade; I only had one, but I had certain other attached troops. I had a couple of negro infantry battalions, and in an emergency I had the 18th Infantry and the 32d Field Artillery from the 1st Infantry Division attached as part of my command. That was approaching the time that the United States started recognizing that we faced a growing military threat. The Russians were still completely intransigent. Czechoslovakia was occupied in 1948. This sort of awakened us. It wasn't until two years later that NATO came into being and really began to build them up. But in 1948 we had only the Constabulary and the 1st Infantry Division. That was it as far as Western Europe was concerned. General Clay was in Berlin then -- he had good sound judgment -- and, of course, General Huebner was his deputy and ran the military part of the show while Clay ran the government. But they were a great pair; they had great faith and trust in each other and they had different characteristics, but they complemented each other beautifully in those two jobs. Clay saw the necessity for putting Western Germany in a better state of preparedness. He realized the intransigence of the Russians and saw what was happening to Czechoslovakia and to the East. Defense plans advanced and more intensive training developed throughout the theater about mid-1948.

Being an engineer, in addition to being a combat commander, and knowing that if we were ever attacked we would be holding on by our teeth, I concentrated a great deal on demolition of major targets. For instance, I remember taking a boat I had available that had belonged to a Nazi, going up to Wurzburg and returning through maybe 25 locks down the Main River and into the Rhine, stopping at each bridge and deciding just what would be required to demolish that bridge. When we went away, we had a sketch and a bill of materials, a plan. Then we implemented it by having it followed up by infantry details and other teams who certainly could place the demolition charges. There was no great secret about that, and so we advanced our defense plans considerably.

There were certain sites where it was hard to get authority to do anything. For instance, the main telephone cables between Paris and Berlin ran through a certain part of my zone. I could never get authority

to mine them if an emergency occurred, but I can assure you that if the Russians had come through in that location, there would have been no further communications getting through. Another one of the most important plans came up for discussion. You've heard of the Edersee Dam. As a matter of fact, when our 7th Armored Division went there in 1946 I'd been told by Jack Ryan, who then was commander of the 14th Cavalry as part of my brigade, that the dam was ringed by some 700 anti-aircraft pieces around the Edersee. This was one target where the British lost quite a few planes. They bombed out about 30 feet of the dam by skip bombing; I don't remember the height of the dam, but let's say 150 feet. On either side of the dam there were small generator plants where the water would flow through and produce electricity, but they were relatively small. Yet out on the plain, about 30 miles from there, at a place called Borkum, was a power plant that picked up lignite, brown coal, and pulled it in by dragline and buckets from a mile around. This plant developed 240,000 Kw of firm horsepower. At the peak, the ones on the Edersee developed 15,000 Kw each; and yet all of the effort was made to knock out the ones on the Edersee, and nobody on the Allied side ever knocked out Borkum. This was the kind of arrangement sometimes made in connection with bombing runs as to what was going to be spared depending on who owns it and where they have friendly interests.

Q: Is it easy to knock out a dam with conventional munitions?

A: It's not easy. It would have been easy for us because we had it planned and I was planting my explosives in the chambers on either side of the bottom. If I had to blow it up we'd have blown out more than 30 feet, but from the air it was difficult. On the other hand, Borkum would have been a cinch if you could hit anything because it stood out on a wide-open plain. It's still there, near Fritzlar, which is where the 14th Cavalry was headquartered.

The other interesting situation resulted from my headquarters being in Wiesbaden. I was east of the Rhine river across from the French forces and decided that I must really build up good collaboration with the French. I made an appointment to call on the French general, who later became the Inspector General of the French Army, General Cailles. The day I called on him I had boned up on my French, which I had used as a boy

and later studied at West Point. He was a three-star general, which is equivalent to our two. He was in his headquarters awaiting me. When I inspected the honor guard (They had an honor guard from the Third Spahis [North African troops] drawn up in front of his headquarters at Bad Kreuznach.), I then addressed them in French. Before I could get to his office the word had gone out that I was speaking French to the honor guard. From that day on, I was "in like Flynn." I could have had the French Army, I guess. Long before there were any written agreements as to what to do in an emergency, between General Cailles and myself we had an arrangement regarding the defense of the Rhine and the Main Rivers from Bingen to Worms, where Patton crossed going in the other direction. We knew what we were going to do if they, the Russians, attacked. We had an excellent rapport and exchanged a lot of visits -- business, social, and military. It was really a rewarding experience working with the French there.

Q: Your comment on speaking languages is so interesting because even today we have resistance on the importance of speaking someone else's language. There still remain many people who say it is not necessary.

A: I know; I faced that once as G-2 when I was working on this language problem. Somebody in the Pentagon, in G-3 training, said, "Well, hell, we are giving them the money, let them speak our language." I said, "By God, it's a good thing, Colonel, you don't work for me, or I'd fire you right now, and I mean right now!" That kind of an approach solves nothing.

Q: I think it must be part of our make-up, though, because there still remain in the military a great many people who think that it doesn't add anything; it doesn't contribute anything.

A: They're the ones who don't have the energy or the talent to acquire a language, by and large. Men who have the use of another language are very proud of it. I wish I had fluent use of the French language; I don't. I've lost it; I can't really use the language. I wish I could.

On my left flank, the British were in Kassel to the North. I had many contacts with the British. The British commander was a friend of mine; we used to exchange visits, particularly hunting visits. By and large, when he came down he would usually be going to

higher headquarters, but we'd known each other during the war, so we had our pleasant weekends together.

The Berlin Blockade was next; we lived through that beginning in late June 1948. I was in Wiesbaden at the time, the western end of the air lift at Wiesbaden Airbase, so those were pretty hectic days. In my 1947 visit I had made the friendship of General Halder, who had been Chief of Staff of the German forces and had been in command at the time of the thrust into Russia. I had some interesting discussions with General Halder. One of the discussions revolved around the logistic support for the armored forces in Germany and the air forces in Germany, and the air force in the assault on Russia, because they were in a very tight spot. Many times he had to decide whether to replace the tanks or to use that tonnange to haul enough ammunition forward by rail for the tanks that were remaining. They had some fantastic problems during winter. Of course, when the Berlin Air Lift came along (This is what made me think of it.), General Halder talked about the impact of air and what it would have meant to him. As much as he loved his Stukas (fighters), if he could have had something for air transport he could have moved troops and supplies by air. For instance, in a force of maybe five divisions, he might have two armored and three infantry divisions. He would advance those armored divisions perhaps 100 miles, but then he got to the limit of what he could do with them until his infantry, which was averaging 22 miles a day, could arrive four or five days later. Then they would advance again. He said, "Just imagine if I could have had air lift. We could have moved these infantry divisions up by air in back of my armor and saved two days out of five, or three days out of five. What an impact it could have had in speeding up a breakthrough."

Later on we managed to get authority for more operations research (This was resisted at first.) to bring over the G-3 for the Russian front. I've forgotten his name, but he was a major general. We finally got authority (after some State Department resistance) to bring German officers over here. We wanted to pick their brains. We got our choice over on a visit, and we finally had him cleared to come back and spend two years so we could study this operation in Russia (which we still don't know much about), when he died.

Another task, which you may know about, probably my most challenging week or ten days there, was the organization of Task Force Trudeau to go into Berlin against possible Russian opposition.

The Berlin Air Lift was under way but it was rather inadequate. General Huebner and General Clay, among others -- Clay looking at it from the international Four Powers agreement, at least the three Western powers positions -- decided one solution was to send supplies over the autobahn from Helmstedt into Berlin on authorized access routes. I was selected as the Task Force commander. This force was to consist of one of my armored battalions, an infantry battalion from the British, the 3d from the French, the 32d Field Artillery (which was frequently attached to me anyway from the 1st Division), the 1st Engineer Battalion of the 1st Division, and a Quartermaster truck company. It had 48 tractor-trailer trucks, which we were going to load with food and supplies for the people of Berlin. The nature of the cargo would be written in German and Russian on the sides of trucks. We were to advance and force our way forward if necessary. For weeks the Russians had been repairing the bridge at Magdeburg, although all you could see when you flew over it was about one board removed; but it was just part of their delaying tactics. The plan was brought back to the Joint Chiefs of Staff here; this was during the Truman administration. The U.S. had to decide what it was going to do about the blockade. I guess they decided it wasn't worth the trouble but we were pretty hepped up and ready to go, with air support promised within the corridor. One thing was discovered, and this is hard to believe but it brought another problem to light -- there was very little bridging in the theater. I don't think anybody knew this at the time, because there hadn't been anything done in the way of training for river crossings, but there was so little bridging in the theater at the time that if we had put a ponton bridge across the Elbe at Madgeburg we would have had to pick up part of it and lay it down again for other crossings because there were some 25 lesser crossings on the route between there and Berlin. We would have had to pick up the bridge behind us. The principal question was, "What were we going to do if somebody stopped us?" We couldn't say, "We're sorry," and just turn around and go back. If we were going, we had to be ready to shoot our way through. We were ready. We were in that mood. Washington wasn't. The Russians bluffed us out.

I was in the unique position of being the only Army general in Wiesbaden. It was the headquarters of the Air Force. I had excellent relations with General LeMay, and later with General Cannon, who replaced him; in fact, I lived near him. There were seven Air Force generals in Wiesbaden; I was the only Army general, but I certainly felt right at home.

As it developed, the command post I had at Camp Pieri was named after an Engineer battalion commander of the 4th Armored Division, who was killed in the vicinity after the crossing of the Rhine. My camp was occupied by an Air Force squadron (my Brigade Headquarters), and when they decided to do something about the protection of the Rhine, I had a Naval detachment. It was quite a combined command for a post of only about 700 people. We had pretty rigid standards of discipline in the Constabulary, particularly in dress, discipline, and training for that matter. The point I make here is that the senior Air Force commander insisted that his troops be held to the same state of discipline that mine were, which pleased me to no end. We had just the finest relationship during those two years -- all services.

Q: Sir, I have a series of unrelated points that I would like to talk about. On 26 May 1948, after you had just been in command for a couple of months, you went to a commanders conference that you attended with General White and General Sebree and you made a remark after you came out of there. I quote: "In the exercise of command, General White is very insistent that responsibilities must be fixed in each case, and that subordinates, other than the ultimate individual to be disciplined, should also be considered when infractions of discipline have occurred." I feel that this is absolutely correct. That struck me, because I wonder if it was too broad an interpretation after discussing with you the last time the Homma case.

A: I wouldn't want it misinterpreted. But I do think that an officer in any echelon is certainly responsible to see that his orders are carried out fully by the next echelon below him. What I've always stated is I think there's a limit; I think two echelons below is about as far down as you can be sure orders are going to be carried out in due process. As a rule, I think to influence the commander two echelons above you is also about as far upward as you can make your impact felt,

by and large. Of course, if you can really convince the commander two echelons above you, he may be able to carry the ball two echelons above him. This is true. I think an officer is definitely responsible for the performance and conduct of the units immediately below him.

Q: I'm going to ask you another unrelated question. This is the relationship of commanders. This was your first troop command. You did have Base X as a general office. My question pertains to your relationship to General White and his staff; there was a letter I spotted and it said this: "The development of any resentment on the part of any member of your staff, which would result in the impairment of the splendid relations that exist between us would be extremely unfortunate." The point I make is that certainly commanders have to relate to commanders. I want to ask two questions and make an observation. First of all, what do you consider the proper relationship to be with your commanders up and down, and your staff? That's the second question -- with you and your staff and the loyalty and so forth. Then I observed that once this letter was written, which was seven months after you were there, there seemed to be an increase in the suggestions that you, as the brigade commander, made to General White. I got the impression that you were taking Colonel Uncle's role. Because of this it did establish rapport, and General White looked to you quite frequently, and accepted and usually executed your advice.

A: General White was Armored and Cavalry all the way through. I was not; I was Engineer. I had to make my way to a certain degree, and the only way I could do it was by producing. I think I did. I'll make that statement in comparison with certain others. But in getting to that point, I had some difficulties where certain members of his staff would try to block me from certain proposals or actions. Or I'd make some comment to General White which would go back to them. One of them said, "What are you trying to do, put me on a spot?" I said, "No, I'm not. I'm discussing with the commander the things that need to be discussed." I never tried to go over or around the head of a man on the staff. This individual came to be one of the more senior officers in the Joint Chiefs a few years ago. My attitude was always this; my first loyalty was to my chief of staff and my commanders. Now the chief of staff is the one to whom I looked to run the rest of

the staff. I didn't want to run every lieutenant colonel and major on his staff. But neither did I permit my commanders to be blocked from getting to me by any member of my staff, including my chief of staff. My commanders were number one. When the chips were down, they were the men I had to count on for results. I always treated my subordinate commanders that way, and I always tried to establish that kind of a rapport with my senior commanders, without trying to complicate any staff relationships. Of course, some staff officers may resent this; G-3 sometimes wants to tell you that he's running the whole damn show. He isn't, unless his commander lets him get away with it. Very interesting; I hadn't realized that there was anything like that in the file, but I know exactly what it infers.

Q: What was interesting to me was that from that moment on I could very definitely see that General White looked to you for suggestions and very frequently heeded those suggestions.

A: He did, particularly in setting up adequate logistical support. As I said, one of the earlier remarks that I made, which I think might have bothered White as well as some of his staff, was that we had all these proudly painted vehicles with the double yellow stripes on them and all. This was fine to see, but a hell of a lot of them didn't run and this is when I made the statement, "What we really need is parts, not paint." Of course, that raised a few hackles, but we finally got more parts and a system set up that worked.

Q: General, as a combat commander, at least of an Armored or Cavalry-type organization, looking back now some 20 years, did you find that your troop-leading techniques changed when you took over at this level from what you were when you were commanding at the company level?

A: Not substantially. In scope, of course, they varied, and in professional knowledge there had to be a difference, but the approach to good command is the same.

Q: Do you feel that there is a need to be more tuned toward your superior commander at the higher level than at the lower level; more tuned to his needs, his desires, his problems? Or should we say it is all relative?

A: Yes, I'd say that it's all relative. I think we covered it pretty well. It was a very interesting assignment -- a very valuable experience, very satisfying. Life in general was pleasant. Side trips were frequent; one could go to Berlin, Switzerland, and other places that were famous and interesting. When I look back on it, I wish I'd done more of that; maybe I stuck too close to my job. We had many pleasant times traveling up or down the Rhine. That's about the end, of course, when I had this sudden warning and orders to come back to the United States for the founding of the Army War College.

Q: Could we talk about that? That is your next assignment, the Army War College. I'd be interested in the fact that you just made that point that you came back a year earlier than you expected. Who were some of the people who were responsible now for bringing you back for this type of assignment?

A: Well, I think General Ridgway had much to do with it, in Washington. In fact, I'm sure he did. While I had known General Ridgway before, I had never served directly under him. I'd had some relationship in the late 1930s when he was G-3 of the IX Corps Area in San Francisco. I was in charge of some river and harbor work in Alaska that I told you about. I'd known him, of course, as a cadet at West Point when he was in charge of athletics. I've often felt that he must have been the one who selected me for the Army War College when the Army decided to reactivate it in 1950. In any event, I had recently had a talk with General Huebner -- the date is probably early in 1950 -- and he had said to me, "I've left you there about two years now, with another year in the theater." (It's a three-year assignment as a rule.) "I've got to be thinking of moving you to a staff job, because that is about all the command a person can expect to get these days." I said, "Yes, sir, and I appreciate it." So nothing more was said. It wasn't over a week later that he called me up and said, "They want you to go back to the United States as the Deputy Commandant of the Army War College that's going to be activated this summer. Do you want to go?" I said, "Well, that's up to you, General." He said, "What do you mean, it's up to me? This is the kind of thing you've been waiting for." I said, "Well, perhaps it is, but after all, I'm here serving you. You've given me a great command for two years, and I'm certainly not asking for relief from it right now. Whatever you want me to do, I'll do." I think he was pleased at that. So he said, "Well, this is your

opportunity. Of course, you'll go back and take this. You will get more information in a couple of days." I did; I got orders sending me back. I immediately made arrangements to visit all the senior military schools in France and Britain. I had known something about the British schools before but not too much about the French, except the local ones they had up in the French Zone of Germany. I went to both countries, to Paris and to London, to the British schools, and had about a week in each place; it was a very valuable experience. Then I returned to the United States about the end of March 1950. I left my family in Washington and reported to Fort Leavenworth again.

Q: Before you start telling me about Leavenworth, am I wrong in assuming that you did have a desire to be the Superintendent of the Military Academy?

A: This had come up once before, but it didn't appear to be in the nature of things for an Engineer to have it. General Wilgus had it during the war. The Army wanted certain changes made, and there were many leaders with good battle records. I don't know that I made any definite approach; I would have been highly honored to have been selected, of course. If you don't ask, people may not realize that you are interested.

General Bull in G-3 had always been a good friend of mine. When General Paul was Director of Personnel and I was Chief of Manpower Control under him, I lived next door to General Paul and he lived next door to General Bull, so the three of us knew each other well. General Bull, quite senior to me, had been one of my instructors at West Point and was always a great supporter. It's not impossible that a vacancy was in sight at that time and that the suggestion came from him. I don't recall, but I would have been pleased with the assignment.