

5-18-1972

Interview no. 11

S. L. A. Marshall

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Recommended Citation

Interview with S. L. A. Marshall by Dale L. Walker, 1972, "Interview no. 11," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Brig. Gen. (Ret.) S. L. A. Marshall (1900-1977)**
INTERVIEWER: Dale L. Walker
PROJECT: _____
DATE OF INTERVIEW: May 18, 1972
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted

TAPE NO.: 11
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 11
TRANSCRIBER: Olga M. Quintana
DATE TRANSCRIBED: May, 1974

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

(Military critic and historian) Born in Catskill, New York, on July 18, 1900; sports and city editor for the El Paso Herald from 1923 to 1927; commanding Major to Brigadier General, U.S. Army, 1942-1952; war correspondent; chief editorial writer for Detroit News, 1927-1962; syndicated columnist for the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times; veteran of five wars.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Viet Nam; discussion of his military career; books he has written on military matters; political and military leaders he has known.

2 1/4 hours

54 pages.

**See also No.'s 181, 197

Interview with Brigadier General S. L. A. Marshall in the News and Information Office on May 18, 1972. Interviewer is Dale L. Walker.

W: I want to retread some of that information in the Times story, what your feelings are toward this new so-called initiative in Vietnam--the mining of the ports and harbors. What is your assessment of that?

M: I was asked last week by four national magazines, three out-of-state radio stations, and two newspapers--the newspapers being The Philadelphia Inquirer and The Los Angeles Times--how I assessed it. I told them that mining operations of this kind were especially difficult, and that Americans have never been good at mining; this is true of both the Army and the Navy. To be effective, the mining had to be like a blockade. It had to be present in force so that obviously there was a bar to entry, or else it was no good at all. Once it was demonstrated that it could be easily violated, then violations would occur; there would be entries. The trouble with this operation is that in order to have a good pattern, the mine layers have got to get in very close to the shoreline. They have to deal with narrow and relatively shallow waters. That makes them vulnerable to missile attack, to attack my MIG's, etc. Therefore, the difficulty of developing a good pattern and maintaining it is great. The other part is that the stuff that is moving by sea would arrive at a minimum of six weeks from now at the front line; so it would be at least a six week time lag. So in the meantime, the crisis in this land battle, the offensive, is going to rise. So it is not going to have an effect on the immediate battle, which is the important thing.

W: Do you think it will have a long-run effect?

- M: As I told the people that called me, I was certain that the policy was aimed at the Soviets and not at Vietnam. It was to give a body check to the Soviets in the hope that they would have a restraining influence on Hanoi; and I did not expect it would have any restraining influence on Hanoi. Everything that I've learned in my experience in dealing with North Vietnam from the beginning indicates that they are completely intransigent. There's no way for anyone to bring them to heel. They have felt for at least six years now that finally they would win this war through the United States stiffening up, and they have held very stoutly to that line. Of course, in dealing with the periodicals, they also asked me if I were in the President's position, would I have made the same decision. I said, "I don't know. I can't answer that question because I am not in his position. I don't know all the technological factors that are involved as the Joint Chiefs know them, and they're his advisors (two of them are Navy men); nor do I know what the high cards are and the game he is playing with the Soviets." So I'm not qualified to say whether I could make the decision.
- W: The latest newspaper accounts say that four North Vietnamese divisions are now positioned to attack Hue at any moment, perhaps on Ho's birthday. I think it's next month, in June.
- M: No, I think it's coming up within a few days. This is a favorite story, that they're always going to attack on Ho's birthday or something of that sort. They'll attack when they're ready to attack and when they think their forces are properly arranged. The difficulty in the battle up there is the lack of armor on the part of the defenders. I think

I think that we have 24 or 25 tanks to defend Hue, and they have anywhere from 125 to 150 tanks that are moving in on Hue. It's very difficult for infantrymen with this lack of armored support to fight a good defensive battle, especially in a country like Vietnam.

W: The speculation is that if the South Vietnamese soldiers can break the back, so to speak, of this part of the offensive that the whole offensive is over with; but if they don't, it strikes a critical blow to the whole idea of the Vietnamization Program and so forth. Do you think it's that critical?

M: I believe Hue is that important for the reason that I'm quite sure that they are not going on an unlimited conquest of South Vietnam; that can't be their plan. Their resources are not equal to that. I believe that what they are projecting is a conquest of the top two northernmost provinces, at which point they will simply stack arms and move out of the city areas into the bush, return to their base camps and say, "Well, now what are you going to do about it?" That's according to their pattern of operations.

W: How do you look upon the idea of Vietnamization? Do you think that that's working?

M: It was working, there's no question about that. When we first started on it, which was in the late fall of 1967, my projection was that it would take until the end of 1972 for the Army to be brought to a level of efficiency and morale where South Vietnam would have a good chance to defend on its own; but that was provided that we did not withdraw down below 200,000. At the same time, it was perfectly obvious that they could not do it unless American air power remained there

indefinitely, because they don't have the technical capability. Their average individual is so-called "illiterate as a fifth grader," and it's impossible for these people to move quickly into a business that is as complex as running a chopper or operating a bomber. So it was obvious from the beginning that they would need American air power regardless of how rapidly the Army was withdrawn. I believe that we've withdrawn too rapidly.

W: We are following a timetable that is far in advance of what we were able to prepare them for.

M: I think the timetable was tactically reckless. I have been a White House advisor on the rate of withdrawal, and I know at least some of the technical problems involved. In part, my advice has been followed; I don't mean it was followed because it was my advice, but it was what I thought was the proper thing to do. For instance, the recommendation that we withdraw 100,000 the first year, I made that flat out. I think there was a little too much optimism with respect to the ability of the South Vietnamese Army to stand on its own. Simply because there was not much pressure in South Vietnam over the last two and a half years, it was considered that these people were doing better than what was the nature of the case.

W: Looking back over your personal observations during your several tours and trips there, how would you sum up our entire conduct of this war, that is getting seemingly on everyone's nerves, even though they believe we ought to win it militarily?

M: From the beginning, we violated all the principles of war, and we

violated them right at the top level; and I mean at the White House level. We gave away the principle of surprise; we telegraphed every punch we made. We did not concentrate. We started with a piecemeal operation, thereby giving the enemy time to move ahead of us and get more forces in South Vietnam than we had there. In 1968 I was called over by General Westmoreland, in May or June of that year, to make an overall estimate of the situation for the benefit of command, the Ambassador, and anyone else in the government concerned. I was certain by that time that we had it made, that all we had to do was continue the way we were going, only refine our operations to make them more efficient. A large part of our waste, and I'm talking about waste in individuals over there, was due to our own carelessness. I estimated that about 35% of our losses were due to our own mistakes. This is not laying anything on the top command. These mistakes were made at the lowest levels; carelessness of our security and that kind of thing. When I came back in June of that year, Mr. Nixon called me to come see him. I dealt with him on the 19th of July of 1968. I gave him the estimate that I've just given you here. I said we had to continue what we were doing, we had to keep on doing the best we could to perfect it, and cut out on these suppliers and the big sweeps which I thought were tactically indefensible. Above all else, I stressed the necessity of the continuation of the bombing of the North, which we were doing at the time. When President Johnson suspended the bombing just before the election, I concluded that this was an entirely new ball game, and we were going to get into deep trouble again.

W: When President Nixon announced the mining operation, the polls that were

taken by the news media and by other research groups were overwhelmingly in support of this mining operation, and moreover showed that a vast majority of American people were willing to go even further to end this war, and presumably they meant militarily. Does it surprise you that the cross section shows something quite different than what we are subjected to almost daily about the emphasis on the peace movement, rather than on the offensive?

M: It didn't surprise me. I think this is just an example of how Americans tend to get excited about their own things all the time, to go off on tangents and over-emphasize the minor impressions of the situation. Why should one be astonished that the majority of Americans support this? If you look at the statistics, they make it perfectly clear that approximately 47% of American adults are people who have served their country in time of war, or the relatives of the same. They're veterans. This is a very considerable block of the community. These people almost inevitably are in support of the President and his position, and they stand for a strong position on the part of the United States. They realize that once the United State becomes timid, once it moves fearfully, we have had it.

W: It is surprising to me that some of the candidates for high office in the country either do not recognize that fact or seem to think that a total all-out, pull-out type of position without even a residual force remaining is somehow going to appeal to the electorate. It would seem that that's kind of political suicide.

M: It is in a sense. I think that it's going to tell in the elections. For instance, I cannot imagine certain candidates on the Democratic side having any possibility of election if they are nominated. I can't imagine McGovern

being elected because he's made his position so unmistakably clear. He's a very intense and sincere man; but the more the electorate hears from him, the more certain it is that the majority is going to turn thumbs down on him. However, I think the candidates are like other individuals. They tend to confuse two things. We always talk about public opinion. What we are actually talking about is the consensus of the press, how the press reacts to the situation. This impacts on Washington and every politician there. They're under the influence primarily of the Washington Post and the New York Times. They think this is the voice of the country; it isn't. It's just the voice of two newspapers and the voice of a lot of prima donas who are operating close to the White House.

W: Now, you've had an opportunity as a newspaperman, a historian, and a military man through your entire life of being able to observe the press corps at work in Vietnam. What is your conclusion on what we have been fed about this war? Does the average man on the street really know what is going on there?

M: I'll give you an estimate that I made some months ago in dealing with the Chief of Information for the Army over there. We were talking about the operations of the press currently in Vietnam. We had all together more than 500 correspondents in the course of the war from the United States. He asked me how many I thought were qualified to be correspondents, and I thought back and said, "I would say about 17." He said, "Well, I'll put it a little higher; I'll put it at 19." Most of our correspondents over there are more callow than new police reporters. They know nothing about the war, nothing about the services. They're not interested in the nature of war. This has been on a declining scale ever since WW II. The press corps that covered the war in Korea was far less competent than the press corps in WW II. Most of those men went to higher jobs; they were no longer interested in being war

correspondents. And Vietnam is the worst of all. In the meantime I'd seen the press corps in Lebanon, and once again we had only a very meager minority of individuals who were qualified to do the work. We've had a descending scale of reportage since WW II, and this is parallel to a change in journalism itself. When I was a young editor in El Paso in the 1920's, most of my staff were men who had come up through the school of hard knocks. They were not college men, well educated men, but they learned how to do it in a country shop or had taken a job as an office boy and worked up. But there were two things that we believed in with all our hearts at that time. One was that the essence of good journalism was good writing, and the second was that you tell the truth to the limit of your ability. Making a great story for the sake of a great story was not the important thing; you get at the facts.

W: I have been a close reader of the coverage of the war, and this may be totally unfair because I don't have any of the experience that you have; but I would be very much surprised to read in Newsweek, Time, the New York Times or the Washington Post any story that puts the management of the war in any favorable light. It seems to me that the correspondents that go there, go there with their papers' editorial policy in their heads and they do not deviate from it. Do you think that may be far-fetched?

M: I would say that this is true of the correspondents for the daily press. They do take note of a paper's policy; and from that time on, if the paper is anti-war, then they're going to try to hang it on the Army, the services, and the government. As to the newsweeklies, I wouldn't go along with this criticism. I can't tell you what is responsible for this, but I think probably it is due to the attitude of management itself as to what it demands of the reporter. Early in the game, Time would write stories that were supporting the national effort. Their stories were pretty good; they gave a good account of what the Army was doing. Then Time sort of drifted off. Newsweek was very capricious

in its coverage of the war earlier. Yet, lately I have seen some very good stories--they're very well done--in which they are playing the game straight with the military services and they have got accurate reporting. This is not true only of the Army in Vietnam, but also of what they report of the services here in the country. I can't account for this, but I have noticed the switch.

W: I'm sure no one has failed to ask you this. What was your reaction to the whole My Lai story from beginning to end?

M: The reaction was horrification. First, it was unbelievable, as far as I was concerned, because I had never had an experience with any such thing, even an incident faintly resembling it, in my dealing with combat forces in WWI, WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. In Vietnam I covered all together 48 operations in detail varying from patrol size actions, platoon actions and company fights, up to engagements involving operations by two divisions simultaneously, and there was no such incident. So I thought there was gross exaggeration there. Then as I had to get into it as a matter of duty, I found out that the stories were in no sense exaggerated. As a matter of fact, the press was not even aware of how terrible this tragedy had been. The number that were killed, the atrocious crimes that went on within the killing zone paralleled with the killings did not come out during the trials. My Lai can only be explained in terms of the man who was in command of one platoon, except for the fact that there was a second incident on the same day involving another company, in the same operation, at a distant village. It was this horrible coincidence of two individuals just going wrong that brought about the tragedy. It is a massacre without excuse. It's an unrelieved horror and there is nothing that faintly compares with it in our history, except I'd say Sands Creek in 1862, and Washita, which was a Custer fight. There was at least a justification that the hostiles had been declared hostiles, and they were fighting warriors. They killed over 100

warriors in that action, but at the same time it was a great slaughter of individuals and it was done deliberately.

W: Do you think that Lt. Calley deserves the onus that has been heaped upon him for My Lai, or are there others that should have been equally brought to the "bar of justice" so to speak?

M: I have no question about that. He is personally responsible for My Lai. Knowing what I do about Medina's position and his quandary, I'm sympathetic towards his position, because he realized what was happening when it was too late; the fat was already in the fire. The massacre had started and he decided not to get himself involved. Thereafter, he became a victim of circumstances somewhat made so by the attitude of his superiors. But you see, outside of Calley--and I'm talking strictly about My Lai--every other individual that was named was at worst an accessory after the fact. That's the worst you can say about them. Most of them weren't even that because they had only hearsay knowledge of what had happened, and that's not a crime.

W: This is drifting off just a bit, but I wanted to ask you about your memoirs, Bringing Up the Rear. What does the title mean?

M: It's pure happenstance that it has that title. When I went back to Vietnam in May of '68 I was staying with Westmoreland before I went to the field. The first evening he had the theatre surgeon, Colonel Johnson, and his scientific advisor, Dr. Macmillian, in for cocktails. While we were drinking, Johnson suddenly said, "I have the best possible title for a military memoir. Let's shake hands that whoever writes the first one will take this title, and then I'll tell you what the title is." So we shook hands and then I said, "What's the title?" He said, "Bringing Up the Rear." I said, "Swell." When I decided that I was going to write the memoir, I wrote to him, and Westmoreland, and said, "I'm taking the title so the rest of you better brush off. You'll have to get something on your own." (Laughter)

W: Scribner's has that?

M: Yes, Scribner's has both of my new books.

W: When is the first one, Crimsoned Prarie, scheduled?

M: That's scheduled for the Fall. It ought to come out in October.

W: Are the memoirs due for next year?

M: The first volume ought to be out a year from now, and the second volume a year from this coming Fall.

W: You've probably observed and participated in more wars than anyone alive, I would think, with the two World Wars, Vietnam, Korea, and the Spanish Civil War.

M: I've had five wars in a military capacity. I've had the four you've just mentioned, and I was also in the Lebanon Civil War on a duty position.

W: What about the Congo?

M: I was there as a correspondent. I've been to five wars as a soldier and I've been to 18 wars as a correspondent.

W: This is a philosophical point I was going to get to. In writing your memoirs and gathering together what you've recalled, have you reached any conclusion at all about the broad subject of man and his seemingly perpetual perpensity for warring with those of his kind?

M: Yes, indeed I have. Incidentally, I'm not one of these soldiers who holds up his hands and talks about the horrors of war. I've seen it all and therefore I'm plenty against it. As far as my own connection with it is concerned, I'll sum it up in these words. I learned in World War I, or thought I had, that war was pretty easy for me, especially combat. I didn't suffer the stress that most people do, and I went into this line of work largely because I liked excitement and I wanted to find out whether my feeling in World War I was because I was young and had no dependents, or whether I was born that way,

or whether you're conditioned that way and whether your nerves will stay the same. I had a chance to explore this from 1917 until 1958, and I find that if you're in that mold, you stay just about the same. Your reactions to battle will be the same at 68 as they will be at 17. It doesn't bother me. The other thing is, Mr. Walker, it's just a human characteristic that when you find something that you're good at, and it's difficult for other men to take, you tend to go along with the idea that "this is the niche for me." Now, you're asking about my reaction to war and how I feel about the possibilities of peace. I simply repeat a conversation I had with Leon Trotsky in 1938. We were talking in México City. I was the only correspondent that he ever talked to without his doctrinaire clothes on. He levelled with me and just talked as a human being. We had been discussing the conclusion that we both had reached, that we were bound for another World War, that we were coming right up to it. I said, to him, "Mr. Trotsky, do you think if the world had one political system, and I don't care whether it's democracy or communism, that out of having this one system we could move toward a peaceful world?" He said, "Mr. Marshall, are you really that naive? Don't you realize that the seeds of war are in man's nature? His desire to get ahead at someone else's expense, his avarice, his greed, his selfishness, his meanness, his readiness to make a big jump forward at the expense of his brothers, that's where it lies. Once we can cure that condition, then we might do without war. I will say that if we had one system, possibly within 5,000 years we might reach the point where we could." I believe pretty much along that line.

W: In other words, it's a millenium long change of human nature that has to take place.

M: A millenium long; you bet your life.

W: Has it disturbed you any then that in modern times, at least particularly during

the present war (and to a certain extent during the Korean intervention also), that pacifism, rather than any kind of attention to the cold, hard facts of warfare and life, seems to be the clarion call of the day? At least that's what gets the publicity rather than any kind of attention to whether our position is just in a given war or anything else--just pacifism. Young people, for example, are saying that there's no excuse for war. They wouldn't argue with you about human nature at all; they wouldn't give you the time of day if you were to give them the same argument that Mr. Trotsky presented to you. Do you think that there is ever going to be any kind of understanding like this among people?

M: Your first question was if it disturbed me. The answer to that is no, it doesn't disturb me. I don't get disturbed very easily. I just rock with the grain. When you've reached my age it's pretty difficult to get shocked or surprised or dismayed. I'm reminded of a scene in Journey's End where Reilly is talking to Osborn in a dugout just before the great _____ offensive of 1918. They've got a little 2nd Lieutenant in the corner, and he's thumbing over some French postcards of nude women. Reilly makes some remark and Osborn replies with, "Why bother? Maybe the little fella satisfies his lust that way." When I see pacifists parade, I feel the same way. Maybe they've got it in their systems and they've got to get it out, and it's all right with me if they want to do it. We've had this down through the ages and I don't see any reason to get excited about it.

W: We have had pacifism down through the ages in all of our wars from revolutionary times to the present, but has it not made more impact now?

M: Yes, because of the press and also because of a completely exaggerated sense of its own importance. I'll illustrate it in these terms. You've heard it said that the draft deserters of today should be pardoned, that this is a more

wholesale desertion than ever before in the history and would not have occurred except that these people have a good moral position; and therefore they should be granted amnesty. Well, that is bunk from the word go. I must say, if you start with a false proposition, you can't argue it to an honest conclusion. There are somewhere between 20,00 and 70,000 draft deserters from this war. I'm quoting the top figures that you see in the press. Some say that the number is as low as 12,000; there is no accurate estimate. But let's take the top figure, 70,000 draft deserters. Do you realize that in WWI there were 372,000 people tabbed as draft deserters? Finally, cases were made against about 260,000 of them; the apprehended 170,000 and proceeded against them.

W: I had no idea the figure was that high.

M: Well, that's how high it is. The figures in the Indian Wars, which I have recently written about, are as high as 50% of a company going over the hill in one summer. The deserter figures in that war were vastly higher than they are now, but they're making much ado about relatively nothing, and this is part of the propaganda of the movement.

W: Wasn't the motive, then, in the Indian War more abject fear rather than any kind of moral or pseudo high moral?

M: It had nothing to do with morality. In fact, everyone recognized it was immoral, which was the difference between our past positions and this present position. You see, when men go over the hill, it is usually from fear, but now they're saying these men went over the hill for moral reasons. No, they didn't; they ran away because they couldn't take it in most cases. But this is just a part of human nature. Now, as to the desertions in the Indian Wars, once again, civilians were heavily involved in this thing, encouraging it, but for an entirely different reason. They were paying the average cavalryman \$200 to desert, providing that they would get his horse, his rifle, and the

and the rest of his equipment.

W: Have you gone into that in Crimsoned Prairie?

M: Oh, yes; I went into it in great detail.

W: It seems like a significant factor in the Indian campaigns. I don't remember reading about it at any length anywhere.

M: No, I think you'll find occasional references to it, but no real study of the statistics. This is true of practically everything that pertains to the Indian War. There's been no real military research on the operation.

W: That seems extraordinary to me. I don't remember any military man of any kind of consequence--that is, any military historian--that knew anything about military tactics or anything. What would you think would be the reason that after 100 years someone, some military man with similar credentials as yours, hasn't focused in on that?

M: There's the very difficulty. You say, "Someone with similar military credentials." There's no one with similar military credentials. Here's what I mean. The great advantage that I've had over any professional officer is that I have lived pretty continuously with one thing throughout my lifetime as far as the military is concerned--and this is since 1920--where I could devote single-mindedly my attention to strategy and tactics; whereas a serving officer who's in there all the time is moved from one job to another every two or three years. But I have kept at the same thing, especially after WWII. From that time on I was working at practically the same job. Now, if you start with WWII and take my work, you'll find that sometimes I was working as a correspondent, sometimes I was working as a commander, sometimes I was working as a so-called military historian, and other times I was working as a scientist-researcher. The funny part of it is, they were all the same job. I learned quite early that the basis of work in any of these fields is command

of your data, and it's the organization of your data that's a big job; make sure that your data is complete. Now the difference between the four jobs was that I was using the data to move in different directions after I'd completed my data.

W: You told me that in the Second World War you were given two assignments. Would you rehash that for me, about the key that you landed on?

M: There were three of us that founded the historical division on George C. Marshall's order; John Kemper, a West Pointer; Charlie Taylor, who was a professor of Medieval History at Harvard; and then I was a writer and newspaperman. We were Lieutenant Colonels suddenly ordered to get together and organize a historical division that would cover the war. After a few weeks it was concluded that I was the man who had to go to the field, mainly because I was the man who was known to many of the generals and also because I was the only one of the three who'd been in combat. Also, there was a third argument. I'd told my colleagues in the beginning that I was dissatisfied with everything I'd ever read about battle in military history. I was convinced that it was made of whole cloth and that I was certain that there was a better way to do it than anyone had discovered. For these reasons, I was sent to the Central Pacific, and the first invasion was the invasion of Butaritari Atoll. This was a general invasion; we were landing on the so-called Makin Island, which was part of Butaritari Atoll. I had been given an additional general staff assignment, and that was to increase our take of enemy prisoners of war--Japanese. I was operating with a nisei interpreter on a jeep. I went ahead for the first two days dealing with troops in line, trying to find my new system. I found out that everywhere I went, dealing with sergeants, privates, or captains in line, I got from them nothing except phantasmagoria. Their imaginations were inflamed and obviously they couldn't tell the truth.

They didn't know what the truth was.

W: Were these people fresh from battle?

M: This was during battle; the fight was still on. So at the end of two days I concluded that there was no system, that I was on a wild goose chase. I wired the War Department that I couldn't suggest or find anything and therefore I was going on with my second mission, which was increasing the take of enemy prisoners of war. So I started operating with the nisei interpreter and the loudspeaker system, and joined the battalion that was going to the end of the island. Then we got sandbagged that night. The perimeter was charged 11 times and we had one hell of a fight. It was one of the worst nights of my life, as far as battle was concerned.

W: Was this an ambush?

M: No, it wasn't an ambush. We'd gone into perimeter, and without knowing it we had camped or set down right next to the one large body of Japanese still left on the island. There were 250 of them that were just 90 yards away from us. They were all loaded with saki and they came on and hit us throughout the night. By morning, their survivors had pulled back into the bush, and we started our march to the end of the island. I said to the battalion commander, Colonel Joe Hart, that that was the worst scramble fight I'd ever been in in my life. "If I could find out what happened to your troops last night, I can determine any situation in war." He said, "I agree with you. I haven't the slightest idea what happened anywhere around the perimeter." We were enclosed. I was right at the center of the position with Hart. When I say center, it was about 45 yards through and 150 yards across, in the old fashion. When we got up to the end of the island, I sent for the machingunner who had held the position and kept the defense going after everything else on the front line was lost. I also sent for the lieutenant who had commanded him. They came

back to me and I started talking to the lieutenant first. Suddenly the machine-gunner came in and said, "Oh, no! You didn't do anything of the kind, Lieutenant! You didn't give me that order. That's not true!" So to settle the dispute between these two men, I brought in the rest of the platoon and started with the beginning of our settling down at the perimeter, so that we could get the thing consecutively. I suddenly found the truth completely revealed. They could remember everything that had happened to them through the night. I got not only the story of the machinegunner, but I got everything that happened to the platoon. So I knew that I suddenly had stumbled by accident on what I was looking for. Then I went on and applied that the the whole batallion, and then I applied it to the division operation as a whole. And by the time that the Kwajalein operation came up two and a half months later, I knew exactly what I wanted to do, and I applied it to the 7th Division as a whole in the invasion of Kwajalein, and then to the 164th Regiment at the invasion of _____. Everywhere it worked out like a blueprint. It just came up beautifully.

W: You carried that forth subsequently.

M: Yes, that's right; I did. Incidentally, I had three officers come out to replace me. One of them was a 2nd Lieutenant and another was a corporal. I didn't expect much of the corporal, because he was sort of weak-eyed and sniffling and he promptly got pneumonia and was hospitalized for two weeks. The 2nd Lieutenant took off like a bird, though he'd never done this work before. But the two men concerned were James McGregor Burns, who was the corporal, and the 2nd Lieutenant was Edwin G. Love, who wrote Subways are for Sleeping and Arsenic and Red Tape, a very successful novelist and historian.

W: I wonder if they were able to adopt any of those techniques.

M: Oh, they adopted them immediately. As a matter of fact, Jim Burns went on and applied this to most of the Battle of Okinawa, and his book on Okinawa

was based on the same research. Jim has said in his writing that I was responsible for getting him started as a historian, for teaching him the track along which to follow. Now, when I got to Europe, I had 99 officers all together on my staff, and 242 non-coms, and I found that about 18 or 20 of the officers could do this work and about a score of the non-coms were quite good at it; but it is a special technique. It doesn't require a lot of brains; you just have to know how to do it. You have to follow one rule consistently; and that is, you start at the beginning and you do things in chronological order. That way you get recall from your troops. And the system will work just as well under fire as it does when you're in a perfectly safe position somewhere to the rear.

W: Were you able also to accomplish anything on that second objective of increasing the prisoner of war count?

M: No, not at Makin, because as it happened in coming back from that battalion that morning to carry a message to get support up because their wire had been cut, I got ambushed. The remaining Japanese, there were 162 of them, I laid an ambush for the first person coming along the trail, and I was the one, along with my little detail of two men in the jeep. Right after we pulled out of the ambush, which was about 200 yards long, I got troops up there and was responsible for the deployment that resulted in the destruction of what remained of the Japanese on the island. So instead of carrying out my second mission, I killed my second mission out of this very operation. Then I was able to study it prior to going to Kwajalein. I realized that everything we were doing in the American Army was wrong when it came to taking prisoners. We were using nisei interpreters, and like Mark Twain said of his wife's cussing, she knew the words but she

didn't understand the tune. This was true of these fellas. They knew the phrases but they did not know Japanese military talk. So, what I did was form a Nisei Council of ten older Japanese in Oahu headed by Baron Goto, who was the head of the Extension Department of the University of Hawaii, and is still a great figure in Oahu. He's the Chancellor of the International Center and he's quite a figure in our history. During the next two months I got them together with the division G-2's and it was out of their brains that I got the techniques that I applied at Kwajalein, where I took 170 Japanese prisoners, which was the first big break up to that moment.

W: Moving back a little bit from the second to the first war--you were the youngest officer in the AEF, is that correct?

M: I was the youngest officer in the Army when I was commissioned, yes.

W: Were you not yet 17 when you were commissioned?

M: No; I went over at 17, but I was past my 18th birthday when I was commissioned.

W: I take it you had graduated from El Paso High in 1917.

M: I never graduated from anything in my life.

W: You attended El Paso High?

M: I'm a high school dropout. You see, the war came along when I was in the middle of my junior year.

W: What impelled you to go over?

M: That poster that says, "Uncle Sam wants YOU!"

W: Oh, the James Montgomery Flagg poster.

M: That bothered the hell out of me. It was on every El Paso corner, and I got to the point where I tried to dodge them, but there were so many of them that I couldn't. I enlisted in the Navy initially, and then I found

out that it would take six weeks for me to get to training camp, because all the spaces were filled. That's how I happened to become a soldier. I didn't have any feeling about the services before I went in and I was afraid that the war might end in six weeks. I went into the Army and to my amazement I discovered that everything in the Army was ridiculously easy for me. I was an all-around athlete, and it's much easier for an athlete to make this transition than it is for the non-athlete. And I'm talking about body contact sports. You're accustomed to handling objects. It's just as easy to handle a grenade as it is to handle a football. I was accustomed to handling a bat; it was just as easy to handle a rifle. And if you're an athlete you're accustomed to hitting the dirt. In other words, you've got coordination for these things, so you take them up very quickly. That was responsible for my easy adjustment. But the other thing was that I hated reveille. I couldn't stand getting up early in the morning; I still can't stand it. I've been that way all my life. So right after I got in, I started looking for ways to beat reveille. I found that by putting in for school duty I could miss reveille and all formations and get up at 7:30 in the morning. I started putting in for school duty and I went to six schools in six months: Grenade School, Demolition School, Bayonet School, Infantry Specialist School, Reconnaissance School; I forget what the sixth school was. And I was doing this to keep from having to get up early. In the meantime I was moving from private up to sergeant, and my superiors concluded that this was a mark of great diligence on my part. I didn't argue with them; I don't argue with higher authority. I let them suffer the illusion and it gave me a lot of brownie points.

W: That helped the commission, I take it?

M: No, it was battle field study. Those are the only schools, incidentally, that I've ever graduated from. I've never gone to school as an officer, and oddly since I was made 2nd Lieutenant I've never taken any kind of examination in the Army. I think that this is probably the most fortunate thing that has ever happened to me!

W: Was your first combat at the end of 1917 when you went over there during the big Spring Offensive?

M: That's correct.

W: You went all the way through the Hindenberg Line operation of the Argonne?

M: My part in that was the battle of Soissons. That was the first large battle that I was in. Then I went through the St. Mihiel and the Argonne, and the Ypres-Lys offensive which was in Belgium. Those were my four stars in ETO.

W: You stayed on during the Army of occupation?

M: Yes, briefly; then I was called back as an instructor at the infantry candidate school at _____. I commanded a platoon of Marines at that point, because I was the last instructor to arrive and they were the last candidates. Then I took command of a company at St. Anne in France and then I took command of a rifle company at Le Mans, France. I finally took command of a black company at Brest. I stayed over until September of 1919, then I came on back. I was separated at Fort Bliss and then I came out to the College of Mines, and then I joined the football team. It was quite a change.

W: At that time you had no desire to stay in the Army, regular or reserve?

M: No, not really. I hadn't discovered up till that time that I was particularly interested in the military. But I do recall that it fired my

imagination and I wanted to know more about it; and I'd already made up my mind that when I went out into civilian life that I was going to study military science on my own, to the limit of my ability. In fact, I arrived home almost flat broke. I had lost \$1100 in a crooked poker game on the transport home. I was playing against a major who was a professional gambler from French Lick Springs, and he was using a marked deck. And we didn't discover it until just before we landed in New York. So I arrived in El Paso with \$1.50 in my pocket. I started walking up from the station and I saw a book in the bookstore in the Mills Building. It was John Masefield's Gallipoli. It cost \$1.50, and I figured that I might as well be totally broke. I went and bought the book and walked five miles home, because I didn't have any money left for car fare. But that was the beginning of my military library. It's still there, and there are 4500 books in it now, all at my home. I started building the library at that time with the idea that it's possible to build a library so perfectly that you can write everything out of your own library; you don't have to do any legwork to do research elsewhere. That's the reason I can write a book so quickly. I've never spent more than six months on a book and shortest time that I've ever written a book in is seven nights.

W: Which one was that?

M: Blitzkrieg, my first successful book. I'd say that the average book takes me three to four weeks, but it's because I can just sit down at the typewriter and write it out.

W: This is a mixture of World Wars I and II. Lawrence Stallings, in a book that you highly praise, mentions that you were responsible in some way

for letting the Army know that the American soldier was losing his ability to hike or walk, losing something as a soldier. How did that all come about?

M: This was out of my field research in Korea. In World War I we would march 18 to 20 miles with full packs with no stress. I found out that in Korea we had to cut down our potential by more than half. If our men went about five miles on a march they were pretty well beat down. I must say that Vietnam has brought us back, because the situation over there is rather rigorous and actually the training became better. In the years between Korea and Vietnam they were going for more exercise, so they did get more toughening while they were in the recruit stage. Also, in the course of my work I discovered something that had not been known before. This came out in a little book published in 1948: throughout history, science and medicine and the military had missed at the nature of fear and courage; that fear is not just a mental process, it's a biological process. It has the same impact on the body as fatigue. It slows up the adrenal cortex, it puts lactic acid in the muscles, and destroys the male sex hormone. In other words, it deprives a man of his manhood. In the course of that I also found out that we had miscalculated entirely the physical effect of overloading men. The more you overloaded a man, the more fearful he became. So in that period I laid down specifications for what we should do with our troops: that we should never march them more than 10 or 12 miles, that we should never load them with more than 38 pounds in training (which would include everything that they had-- the uniform, the helmet, the equipment, the rifle), and that would be his maximum. And instead of loading them heavily with a maximum load and them

extending the march, what we should do was to keep the load light at 38 pounds and then extend the march. And instead of weakening their leg muscles, we would build them up. So the Army came to these procedures out of this work. This was done just prior to the Korean War, but we didn't have a chance to go far enough with it, to make a change in the Army. In the years that followed Korea, this was taken seriously into the training system. I also at the end of World War I had concluded that our whole system of musketry was wrong. This was explained in the book, Men Against Fire, that firing at stereotyped targets did us no good whatsoever. What we needed was collective musketry, firing on order, as if we were in battle. The Army came to this system around '47 or '48 out of the recommendations that were made in Men Against Fire, and that continues until this day. What was substituted for it was a new exercise called "train fire." They still go for that.

W: This is less emphasis on marksmanship and more on firing on order and fast fire.

M: That's right.

W: And the Army follows that procedure today.

M: That's correct.

W: You still give out marksmanship medals, I take it.

M: Oh yes, but they're awarded on a quite different basis.

W: You've known most of the great military leaders of our time. I want to throw some names at you and get a kind of capsule reaction to them. Did you know Pershing, or do you have an opinion about him?

M: Yes, I knew him. I met Pershing in 1915 at the mess hall of F Company, 16th Infantry, at old Camp Cotton, where the Chamizal zone is now. He

came in to inspect the mess and I was introduced to him by the company commander. I met him again in France when he inspected my unit. Had you asked him just before he died if he had met me, he would have said, "No." He was regarded as a hard-driving marinet. I think that that part of his reputation is exaggerated. I think he was a reasonably considerate commander. But if you have read my book on World War I, you will recall that I did not treat him very gently because I think his reputation was greatly exaggerated. He was credited with doing that which he did not do, and that was keeping the American Army together. The fact of the matter is that it was spread all over "Hell's half acre."

W: That has been a persistent legend about him, though. In fact, those that know anything about him at all will usually land on that and say, "Well, in the Great War he kept our Army from being spread out like mayonnaise among the French and becoming canon powder under Koch's command."

M: Well it just didn't happen. Now, the other fault that I took him apart on in my book was that he tried to retain all power in his hands and this was completely wrong. He screwed up out there because he tried to command the Army as a whole; he tried to command the 1st Army and he tried to command the Com Z also. After getting into a row with Newton Baker over this he put in _____ because Newton Baker wanted to force him into taking General Goetls as head of Com Z (the communication zone, the rear area). This is why the AEF was so badly mishandled and mistreated after the Armistice. We leaned on our allies for supply and shipping and they had done their best to provide us with such in order to appease us and make us feel good. Then just as soon as the Armistice came along, all those props were withdrawn and this expedition was on starvation rations,

badly housed, no fuel, etc. It was a great suffering period.

W: Pershing's reputation rests largely on his command of the AEF, but he was in the Spanish American War in the Philippines, in the Indian Wars, and on the border here against Villa. Looking over his entire military career, do you think he deserves as high a place in the Pantheon as he's given?

M: Except for one thing, I would say no: the fact is that in WWI he completely dominated the scene. You can't think of another general in our history that dominated the scene in the same way, with the exception of Washington. But when you think of WWI you think of Pershing. I judge a commander partly in this way, as to what he has contributed to military thought. Where are his original ideas? I can't find any on the part of Pershing. I can't find anything that he added.

W: That would seem to be a key ingredient of greatness in the case of a military commander.

M: That's right. I think Pershing was a very fair-minded man, but I don't put him among the great soldiers of the United States. Incidentally, I think U.S. Grant was one of the greatest figures in our history; a real great commander, and yet a very simple, plain man. No genius, but he had what it takes to be a general.

W: What about MacArthur?

M: Well, that's a subject I'd rather not discuss, really. I refused to do a biography of him on which I got a very good offer. I said that my feelings about him were so prejudiced that I would not like to approach the job.

W: Would you like to have anything on record about those feelings at all?

M: I have some things in my memoirs about him. As a matter of fact, he is a mystery to me. I cannot understand why none of this purple prose, none of this command of the language, none of this oratory and eloquence comes out until after he went to the Philippines, just before WWII. You find nothing in his early papers that indicates he had any original ideas at all. There isn't anything out of his command time in the AEF that indicates that we was a thinking soldier. Collections of his papers do not reflect a brilliant man; and yet, when you look at his command in the Southwest Pacific, he didn't have a real star on his staff, so there must have been a great brain in there somewhere. And it must have been Mac Arthur, just by process of elimination. There are so many things about him that are completely fake that it's hard to determine what is the real man and what is the myth. For example, if you read his memoirs called Reminiscences, they were written from beginning to end by Lieutenant Edmond Love.

W: Those were published in LIFE.

M: In LIFE and Time. What happened was that LIFE had bought his memoirs for a million and a half dollars and sold \$500,000 worth of it to McGraw-Hill for a book. They teamed up in this thing and then after they bought it they discovered that he had written his memoirs and there were three pieces of plagiarism tied together. And that's when they called Love in to do the job over from scratch.

W: Even with the refurbishing, they are the most unrevealing, superficial documents that I have ever seen of a man with as much controversy, esteem, and hatred as he has generated.

M: Well, when Ed first got the assignment he called me from New York and said

that he had to see me. He said he wanted to talk about MacArthur. I said, "Ed, I'm leaving for Europe tomorrow, so I cannot see you. I will be gone for several months." So he went on and took it. He wanted my advice as to whether he should go ahead. Incidentally, Courtney Whitney told him never to mention my name in MacArthur's presence, because MacArthur hated my guts. He thought I was the main enemy of the MacArthur camp. Well, I didn't feel that way about him at all. There were certain things I objected to in MacArthur but I didn't regard him as an enemy. We were not in the same league, for one thing. But at any rate, several years after, when Ed was promoting his book, Situation at Flushing, (this was well after MacArthur was dead and Reminiscences had come out), Ed came to Michigan to see me. I said, "Why did you call me concerning MacArthur several years ago?" He said that it was a different matter, that he wanted to ask me a different question now. He asked, "Did that man ever have anything? Was he really a general or was he a fake from the word go?" I said, "Ed, you astonish me. Why the question?" He said, "Well, you answer my question first." I answered it as I answered you just a few minutes ago, that he must have had something. Then I said, "Why did you raise the question?" He said, "Because he was the goddamnedest liar I ever knew in my life."

W: He had read the original manuscript of the book?

M: No, it was his dealings with MacArthur day after day. He was dealing with him every day for 18 months in the Waldorf Towers while he was re-writing the book.

W: He seems to have had the benefit of insight that few others had, because most people do seem to be mystified by MacArthur.

M: Well, I could spin MacArthur's stories endlessly, but it's a rather futile exercise and I'm not really interested in it.

W: Let's move on to another man who's just as controversial in many respects-- Patton.

M: I've always thought that Patton was at least half mad, and that gives him the benefit of the doubt. He was an extremely successful man in two respects. As a general commanding battle troops in a fluid situation, he was just as good as they come. He was daring to the point of recklessness. His other great quality was that he could radiate his personality over greater masses of men than any general I know in modern times. Men in the 3rd Army in Europe actually believed that they were fortunate to be in the 3rd Army because they were serving under Patton. Well, this takes a lot of doing; but he had that, there's no question about it. He was an extremely eccentric man. When he got up against strong, serious work and the enemy in a fortified position, he was just like any other general. He had no special magic and some of his operations were on the foolish side. But on the whole he was certainly one of the great military figures in our history. I had some brushes with him of a highly personal nature and I was able to trump his ace on every occasion; and the odd part of it is that he didn't resent this. He seemed to appreciate it. The mere fact that we did have a row and he did something I didn't like and I got him overriden, from that time on he treated me more gently. Incidentally, Patton had a good military brain, even in the classical sense. His writings, his memoirs that were put together by General Paul Harkens after the war, that's good military writing and there's a lot of original thought in it.

W: What did you think of the movie portrayal of him?

- M: Extraordinary! It was mesmerizing! I kept looking at Scott and thinking I was looking at Patton. Just terrific. I think it's the greatest portrayal I've ever seen on the screen.
- W: I agree with you. Do you think the recent publication of the Patton papers added to or detracted from the Patton legend?
- M: It will certainly detract a lot, to people who read it; there is no question about that. Years ago I wrote The Armed Forces Officer, which was published by the Government Printing Office, and that is the guide to conduct, the philosophy of command, for all officers of all the Armed Services; not just for the Army, it's for all the services. Practically everything I said in there that an officer should not do, he did. He was always polishing the apple or the boots of his superiors and fenagling for jobs and fenagling for decorations. He would inordinately break censorship in his letters to his wife, and he was always bragging about his courage in his correspondence. The papers leave him pretty naked, really. For instance, when he goes to the AEF with Pershing's party he spends the next three months trying to get his wife over there. He was playing high politics to get her to come to France, not on a job, but just so she could be with him; and he knew this was in direct violation of Pershing's orders.
- W: Does it come out in the papers that he was fully aware of the fact that it was against Pershing's orders?
- M: Oh, absolutely. The papers were organized by one of my Lieutenants, Col. Martin Bluemenson. He's done a very fair job in organizing the papers; but at the same time he mixes the sour with the sweet. Where the thing is to Patton's discredit, he doesn't say it was to his discredit; he just lets the incident speak for itself.

W: On a far different type of personality, what would you say about Eisenhower?

M: I had the job that was more testing of the character of Eisenhower than any other military job in the European Theatre because it was my job to write the score on him as Chief Historian of the Theatre. When I first took over he talked to me very briefly. He said, "Colonel Marshall, your job is to determine the facts and write the truth. Your job is not to support my reputation. If you find someplace where you've got to be critical of what I've done, you go ahead and do it. If I find you deviating from the line of fact, then you may be in trouble. But as long as you stick to what you can prove, that's what I want you to do." I only had one argument with him subsequently, and that was when I wrote for him his report on the war to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It had been done by a group at CHAFE and done very badly, and he called me in and asked me to go over it. I told him that it wouldn't do, it was historically inaccurate. He asked me if I would do it from scratch, so I did. Then he called me and said, "I have some objections to this. You made too much use of the perpendicular pronoun here. There's too much of 'I did so and so.' You know that is not my system of command." I said, "General, I know it is not your system of command, but on the other hand I am historian of the theatre. You have continued to pass credit to others such as Monty and sometimes Bradley in order to get them along and build them up, and make them feel good. But my job as historian does not allow for me to do that or ultimately no one will know what the truth is. Therefore, when you are responsible for the action, I've got to say, 'I'. There's no choice in this matter. If you want somebody else to do it, then they can change it; but I can't change it." And he thought about it for a couple of

minutes, and he said, "I guess you're right. I don't have the right to tell you 'no.'" That's the only discussion we ever had. He was as fair-minded as anybody I ever knew, and I'll add to that that this man was a great strategist and a great tactician. The idea that he was just a diplomat among warriors is nonsense. That he was a melder of Allied forces, that that was his technique--no. He was a great tactician. The essential history-making decisions were made by Eisenhower, and some of them with no one else supporting him. He was the one that said the Kosack Plan, the original plan to invade Normandy, was no good, and he scrubbed it after he was appointed Supreme Commander. Then finally when the British and American Joint Chiefs said, "We're going along with the old plan," he said, "Then you'll have to relieve me. I will not do it because it will fail." And it would have failed. The first plan called for a three division front with a two division backup. He said, "That cannot take Normandy. It's got to be a five division front with a two division backup." It was Ike who was responsible for the extension of the operation. And we really failed at Omaha Beach, and we would have failed miserably had we tried the Kosack Plan. I became convinced of that at that time. The fact of the matter is that as one person I had to work over every single unit in the invasion. The historians were not under me. I was sent by the general staff on a trouble shooting job. I was pulled out of the Pacific. They had 25 historians ashore with the combat forces and I was sent over there because the War Department suspected that this operation was going haywire, it was off the track. After I got dealing with the forces, I went with the 101st Division and initially covered the Airborne. Then I found out that everybody who was with the 1st Division of the 29th and the

4th had flunked their jobs except for one Lieutenant Colonel Gale; he had been doing his job. So I took them over regiment by regiment and company by company. By the end of things I had covered every single part of the Normandy Invasion except for the ranger attack on _____. I had to determine what had happened to the troops and where they had come ashore. This is particularly true of Omaha because they didn't know; the whole thing was scrambled. Finally when I was through I knew more about the invasion than any of the men put together, just out of the nature of my work.

W: Did Cornelius Ryan depend on any of your findings?

M: He says so in his book.

W: What about Bradley?

M: Bradley is regarded as a rather simple, Lincolnesque character, somewhat homespun. That's a false picture. Bradley was a very, very shrewd individual; he's always been very concerned about power. He loved command positions. He was a very good field commander. I would not agree with the assessment of General Eisenhower that he was the best tactician in Europe. I didn't feel this was true; but he certainly earned his five stars. All I'm saying is that the press and other influences have stereotyped him. They give you the feeling that he was a warm, simple man who thinks along simple lines. It is not true. The greatest tactician that I met in Europe, by the way, was the commander of the 19th Corps, General Raymond McClellan. He was an Oklahoma National Guardsman. He was president of the first mortgage company in Kansas City.

W: He was not a regular Army man at all.

M: No, But he was so good that he was offered three stars in the regular Army when the war was over, and he took it. He still held on to his job in Oklamoma City.

W: I have only mentioned five people that would come to the mind of the common person. Out of all your experience, who else would you single out for some special comment?

M: Two of the most brilliant generals we had in WWII you have probably never even heard of. One of them was Ed Hull and the other was Tom Handy. But they were operators at the War Department. Ed Hull later became Far Eastern Commander, well after MacArthur's time and after the Korean War. They were two real brainy men and fine personalities. I thought that General Simpson, whose name is now almost forgotten, was the best Army commander that we had in Europe in WWII, because he handled an Army to serve his divisions primarily. His headquarters and his staff were very unpretentious. They were just working all the time to take care of the troops. Nimitz is one of the grandest figures I ever ran into, and a great Admiral in every sense; just as magnetic as they come. Men were drawn to him. He always had the habit of telling an off-color story after giving instructions to troops when they were going out on an expedition. He'd be very tough during the hours when he was instructing his commanders on how they would act, then at the last minute he would say, "Wait a minute. Have you heard?" By the time we were two days at sea everybody in the convoy had heard this story. It was passed down the line and they all knew it was Nimitz' story. For real magnetism, he had it.

W: More so than Halsey?

M: Oh, far more so. Troops were not particularly drawn to Halsey. They knew him as a name and they liked his attitude, but Nimitz was a different kind. For instance, I remember the Texas Picnic we had in Oahu in 1943 when 30,000 so-called Texans gathered in this park. The next day the Hawaiian police department had to pick up something like 120,000 beer bottles. Nimitz :

came out there with Richardson, who was the Army commander of the Central Pacific, and I saw about 2000 soldiers fall in behind Nimitz and parade along, because they wanted to show their appreciation for him. Though Nellie Richardson was a wonderful guy, there was nobody following Richardson. Nimitz had this was of getting through to people. He would do it in a very simple way. For instance, when the Battle of Kwajalein was over he came ashore on the fourth day and there was a group of correspondents waiting to ask him his impression of this scene of devastation. It was the worst devastation that I've ever seen in a war. He looked it over and said, "Gentlemen, it is almost the worst scene of chaos I have ever witnessed in my life. The only thing that I can compare it with is the Texas Picnic." (Laughter)

W: I don't know whether Nimitz has had a decent biography or not.

M: He hasn't. But this is true of our history. Historians, I've found, like to track after other historians. They want to do another book on the same subject in which there is a lot of secondary literature and then write a better book. There are all kinds of subjects lying fallow and they don't go for them.

W: Because they would have to do the original spade work.

M: That's why an amateur muddler like myself could move into this field and do profitable work in it. For instance, there has never been a biography on George Meade of Gettysburg. There has never been a biography of Garfield as a soldier, and he had a remarkable military career. There are all kinds of stories that are there to be told. Where they have written scores of biographies on Pancho Villa, there have been none on Pascual Orozco. Orozco is a far more interesting revolutionary figure than Villa. I could sit

down and write a 40,000 word book on Orozco that would make people's eyes pop. He was such an extraordinary character; a man who turns coat six times, that's something extra. He was the guy who recruited Pancho Villa. He was also the guy that started the Madero revolution. He's forgotten now.

W: He is a name in the books on Villa.

M: Which gets me back to another point. I've been asked about my motivation for writing. I have never hesitated to reply, "I write to make money. I don't believe in writing for scholarship. When I write a book I write it with the intention of making a profit from it."

W: You have been successful on two scores. One is the making of the profit; the other is being recognized by the people who judge the kind of book that you write. For example, the American Heritage book. I've read two or three different places in which people regard this as the standard book on the First World War, at least from an American military historian's viewpoint. A few years ago the book most often mentioned was the book by Basil Hart, and another one by Cyril Falls.

M: I knew them both well. I knew Basil Hart particularly well. He was a close friend of mine. I was surprised to discover that he spent less time on the Western Front than I did. There is one difference in his career and mine: I stayed in the military. When I got to writing my book I was still thinking in military terms because I was having to deal with military problems. I'd had enough time on the Western Front that I could write a book about it realistically, what life is like; whereas the younger British historians could not remember and Hart himself couldn't remember. I can remember quite well, though I've never written anything

about it. I believe that what you can turn out must be largely conditioned by your experiences. That's true of any book writer. The less that you can remember, the less you can devote to a particular subject out of experience, the more you've got to extrapolate; and guess work is pretty bad. That's where the younger school of British historians go wrong. If the Western Front had been as deadly as they make it out to be in their books, we would have all gone nuts within a week. Where you've got extraordinary difficulty and hardship, you've also got intense humor. It's made so by the circumstances. And there were periods of relief on the Western Front, and then you would enjoy life as you've never enjoyed it before. These things are not brought out in the new books.

W: It seems to me to be an interesting point, because some of the newer historians--not only British historians but American historians as well--show a marked lack of humor in their writings. It seems to be an idea of moving from dismal to deadly without any real break in the action. The kind of thing that I'm thinking of is a book that I'm sure you're familiar with. It is a book on that horrible campaign in the first part of the war that the British were involved in. There is one book by an American by the name of Leon Wolf called In Flanders Field. It is quite extraordinarily well written.

M: Yes, that is a very good book. It is one of the best books on the war.

W: He has also written a book called Little Brown Brothers about the Philippine insurrection. He seems to be in a different league from the kind of man who wrote The Donkeys.

M: He talks in there about the troops being so morbid that they would sing a song, "Oh, my; I don't want to die; I want to go home." I remember the

tune so well. He talks about the troops being so morbid that they would sing this song in the dugouts. That was our gag. It was fun ridiculing your situation. We did that to get a good laugh.

W: The man is Allen Park, on The Donkeys. He is a Britisher and I think the purpose of the book was to put Hague at rest, and also some of the satellites around Hague. These were the donkeys, in other words.

M: Well, Hague did have some donkeys around him. But you recall my treatment of Hague. In the last year of the war, this man was a grand commander; he was extraordinary. I can't think of any general that behaved very well during the first two or three years of the war. They were all up against something that they couldn't understand.

W: Even on the German side.

M: That's right.

W: Among the commanders, who were the foreign commanders that you would place at the top of your list for ability in any of the wars? Let's start with the Germans.

M: In WWII I'd say Manstein was their best general. I do not agree with the deflating of Rommel. I think Rommel was a great commander, not as great as Manstein, but still a very great soldier in the real sense. Incidentally, I was responsible for the recovery of Rommel's papers. In WWI, just try and find a good one. I thought Ludendorff had the most over-inflated reputation of any military commander in history. In fact, I saw Hart in 1960 at the time I was writing my book, and I said, "I'm writing that partly to make up for the damage you did when you put Ludendorff into your book, Reputations Ten Years After. You talk about what a great guy he is. I think he's one of the biggest boobs among strategists in history." He said,

"Sam, I've reached the same conclusion." I said, "Well, haven't you reached it a little late?" He was bad.

W: On the British side?

M: Plumer is credited with being the most exacting of British commanders in WWI. He was the most accurate and he had the best staff planning. Monty in WWII is much derided. He was so slow and he was such a prima donna-- "Impossible in victory," as Pershing said of him. Montgomery was a fine general. I don't see how anybody really can discredit him. He was probably as careful an organizer as any war has ever known, at least in our time. His 21st Army staff work was far better than the staff work under Bradley or any other command that we had in Europe.

W: As a military historian, how do you assess Montgomery?

M: I thought his job in which he's looking back at history is a terrific book. It wore him out. He wrote me about this and he said he'd put four years into and it, that it was worse than fighting a war, and that he would never do anything of the kind again. When he gets to American history he is especially good. I was the one who got him to write about his WWII experiences. He had shut out all the historians in the British Army; and after I took over as Chief Historian, I knew I had to get the allied cooperation established before the war ended or we would never have any transfer of papers. So I went to the French and the Canadians and they immediately accepted my reciprocal proposals. Of course, I was breaking security to do this. I had no right to do it, but I knew I could get away with it and nobody would call me on it later. Then I went to the war office in London and there was a Brigadier Latham there and he said, "Colonel Marshall, we don't know how to deal with an old blighter like Monty."

We put 60 historians ashore with him in Europe and he promptly boot-
ed them out of Normandy; and we haven't been able to get him back
since. Now, how would you deal with such a blighter?" I said, "I
simply haven't any notion." He said, "I have an idea. You return
to France and write me a letter at the War Office and say that you
are writing us in the name of the Supreme Commander and you are ask-
ing cooperation across the board with General Montgomery. We'll
pass the letter on to him and I think he'll respond to you." I
laughed at him, and he said, "It's no laughing matter. He does
respect chain of command." So I wrote the letter, thinking that
it was one for the wastebasket, and ten days later a British Colonel
popped up in my room at headquarters and said, "Colonel Warhorse
reporting for duty, sir." I said, "What did you say your name was?"
He said, "Warhorse. I'm from General Montgomery's headquarters and he
wants to know what he can do for you." He had in tow a major by the
name of Darrow who was a London lawyer, and he struck me as the
shrewder of the two characters. So I kept Warhorse there as "hostage"
and sent Darrow back to Monty with my proposals. He showed up in
about five days and said, "I've got it signed, sealed, and delivered.
I said, "Did you have any trouble?" He said, "Well, he came near kick-
ing me out of his tent four times, but each time he changed his mind."
So from that time on we had cooperation, and out of that he wrote his
two books on his campaigns in Africa and Europe.

W: Looking back over the First World War about the time you were doing your
American Heritage history, did you have any admiration for the British
colonial soldiers such as Kitchner or others, who's come from the Victor-
ian Era, almost, into the First World War?

M: Kitchner is one of the great figures in British military history. I don't see how anybody can discount him. Here he had not been back to Britain since practically the beginning of his military career, and yet he came into the job and quickly realized the proportions of the war and set about organizing the new army. Without a doubt he was a great soldier; many of the colonials were, because they'd had hard field service. As the old Frenchman who was Minister of War under Napoleon said, "It is field service rather than training in a barracks yard that makes an old soldier."

W: What about the French in either of the world wars?

M: I don't think there's any question that Marshall Foch was a master of war, and a very great soldier. I would also say that the reputation of Marshall Weygand was very seriously sullied. He did not have that coming. He was a fine man, he was a fine commander. Weygand was Chief of Staff and then was in command of the French Army at the time of the collapse of France in 1940.

W: In the First World War, wasn't Weygand in charge of the territorial soldiers in France?

M: No. I knew him quite well and I had considerable correspondence with him. He was a straight thinking man, a very decent man, He was not in any sense a collaborator.

W: Who in WWII were the best among the French?

M: Tussini. He became a Marshall and went to Indo-China, and he died while he was there. Le Clerc didn't have a chance. He was just a division commander; he was good as a division commander. But who else have you got? That's about it. Jouan was a pretty good man, but again as to battle command, he didn't

have sufficient experience.

W: What about Petan?

M: I thought he was a disaster from the word go. I didn't believe in him in WWI and by the early 1930's I was certain that his spirit was destroying the French Army. When WWII came along I knew the French wouldn't stand, and I was confident from the beginning that the Maginot Line would be cracked and kept on saying so. Everybody thought I was nuts at the time for saying it--either that or pro-German; but it was obvious to me. I remember writing to one of my fellow correspondents in Europe, Edgar Ansel Morrow, and saying, "You quit touting Gamelin; the general is no good. You're going to find out that the French Army is no good and this army is going to crack wide open." I couldn't made them believe me.

W: What about De Gaulle?

M: "Old Stoneface?" As far as battle experience in WWII is concerned, he didn't have enough to prove anything. His theorizing about war is limited to one book, and it proves that De Gaulle did not understand modern warfare. Most of what he has written about armor is wrong. Had the French done what he proposed, they would have been no better off. As a writer he is superb. He is one of the masters of prose in this century, and without a doubt one of the great figures in modern history. I've had some personal experiences with him, and frankly, I don't like him. He was as rude as could be. On the other hand, when my WWI history came out, he had the kindness to write me a letter and he said, "I have waited for one book to come out on WWI that would be a monument to that event. This is the first book." I still have that letter.

W: He was a great hero.

M: Yes. He was always pretty much of an anti-establishment man. I could not describe myself with that term. For instance, Basil Hart expressed himself

in his memoirs as being that way. From time to time I was opposed to what the establishment was doing, but I was also well aware that I owed my progress to the support of the establishment and not to it's bucking me.

W: One name aside from the military is Churchill. That requires some kind of a comment.

M: Oddly enough, I cut my eyeteeth on his works. When I got back from WWI, I picked up a book which he had written when he was about 20, I liked it and began buying everything that he wrote. I guess I've got a complete Churchill library.

W: Those early Churchill books are extremely hard to get.

M: I don't think his style influenced me a bit. I don't have that kind of style. When I'm dealing with war I would rather make the mistake of understatement and I stay away from adjectives; I want the action to explain itself. It's terrible enough as it is. His style is tremendous. Without a doubt he always thought as a soldier, but he oversimplified strategy greatly. That's all right when you can get away with it, but there are times when there's no payoff in the indirect approach at all. We'd all rather slip up behind somebody and give him a rabbit punch than hit him in the jaw, but it just doesn't work out that way.

W: I've run across the criticism of Churchill as a writer that he seldom tripped up as a stylist, but as a historian he tripped up badly on that six volume set of books that he wrote about the First World War. It has never been accepted as a diffinitive work, even on the British side.

M: He didn't do six volumes; you're thinking of the Second World War. He did the Unknown War and the World Crisis. It hasn't been accepted simply because it is slanted; but it's good writing and it's good history. Here is the difficulty of Churchill as an historian; Churchill will never sell Churchill

short. He was a principal figure in these operations, so he will always put his best foot forward. That means that right from the beginning you're getting the war from Churchill's point of view. This is true certainly of WWII. The other thing is, he's almost always dealing with high level situations. It is from reading books by Sir John Harding that you can get your appreciation and respect of Churchill in perspective. To sum it up, there are six or seven individuals who are right next to him in this period who are, at the same time, fair minded; and you can tell what his limitations are as well as his strengths.

W: You were born in 1900, which means that you have lived through the eras of the two Roosevelts and up to and including the present administration. Of those Presidents that you've had a chance to observe at close range, during war and peace, could you name one that you would single out as the best man?

M: Harry S. Truman, without exception. There are three Presidents with whom I have had close acquaintance and fairly close association. They are Truman, Eisenhower, and Mr. Nixon. Mr. Nixon does a very good job as Commander in Chief. He commands more in the style of FDR or Truman than did either Johnson or Kennedy. It's a pretty well-balanced appreciation of how a Commander in Chief should proceed. I loved Truman on the job. He had tremendous courage. He knew how to organize government and he knew how to use it, and he knew how to make decisions when they were tough. He also was a wonderful guy.

W: One of the recent issues that you were involved in to some extent was the CBS program, "Selling the Pentagon." It seems to me that you left a fairly indelible impression in that television interview with CBS when you felt that the program had a sizeable amount of fraud in it. I watched the program twice, and to me it was fraudulent on the face of it. What

is your opinion about the whole controversy over that program?

M: It was, in the first place, a greatly inflated debate. You used the correct word when you said that most of the show was fraudulent. One point that I made in main criticism was that it was never said in the production of this picture that the main purpose of the Information Center was to help the press, TV, the authors, and the general information services that take care of the American public. This wasn't said. If you eliminated all the individuals who were engaged in that activity, the costs of public information services in the Pentagon could be cut by 60% or more. For example, they didn't bring out that they made that picture with the help of 2000 man hours from people at the Pentagon. This is a case of the dog that bites the hand of the man that feeds him.

W: I had the definite feeling in seeing the picture and knowing only a bit about the information agency, that a preconceived notion about this was to show that the Pentagon information people were simply a propaganda arm of the Pentagon, and they said, "Now we've got this theory and we're going to make up a film to prove it."

M: Right. Here's an illustration. They took old film clips from propaganda films, interior information films, that had been done 10 years before, and they picked out the worst possible cases. Now, if you did this with any individual or any private industry, went back into everything it's done and brought it together and said, "This is representative of their operation," you could destroy any person or any firm on the face of the earth. And that was what they had done. They'd taken the sour stuff. People asked why it was that the services didn't destroy this stuff when they knew it was so bad. Under law as written by the Congress they're not permitted to destroy it. They have to keep

it there; they have no choice in the matter. It was because they complied with the law that this archive was turned against them.

W: Would they have had a choice in letting CBS or any other network use that material?

M: No; absolutely not.

W: I'm sure that most suspected along the way, as this film was in production, that they were going to be lined up against the wall and shot down.

M: They couldn't have done anything about it. In connection with those film clips I was telling you about, they indicate, for instance, that this is the general spread of the information out of the Pentagon, so you get the impression, "This is the Army." There wasn't one single film clip that was taken from the Army archive--not one. All of those film clips were from stuff used by the other services. Where they got all those officers going around the country and talking about the menace of Russia, this was part of the information program indicating that this was coming out of the Pentagon. As a matter of fact, it was coming out of the industrial war copies, which has nothing to do with the Pentagon. It had nothing to do with the Information Services; it was an entirely independent move.

W: You wrote a magazine article for TV Guide about your reactions to the program. Did you get some mail on that?

M: Oh, yes; tremendous mail. I think something like 1500 letters came in.

W: Were you satisfied by getting your views out on it that you made any dent in reversing the effect that the program and subsequent publicity had?

M: Not really. For example, I wrote the Washington Post an article which they published and said that in the course of this TV program they had asked Fulbright and Silvester whether they thought it was proper for the services to discuss foreign policy, to arrive at foreign policy. They

said, "No." They thought it was wrong for the services to discuss foreign policy or put foreign policy before the troops, even to go into such things. I said that the question was not passed to me and that I was the only person that knew anything about it; and this is the way it happens on TV. When I was made Chief of Orientation of the Army in 1942, there was a wave of criticism from the press of the United States that our troops didn't know anything about the cause for which they were fighting, and that the services were letting them down, the services were not giving them anything about the cause. There came a note from the White House to the Chief of Staff asking why this was so, this great wave of criticism about troops being left in ignorance; and General Marshall replied that it would be taken care of. I said there was only one way that we could inform them about the cause, and that was to inform them about what the foreign policy in the United States was, to inform them about the North Atlantic Charter, to inform them about the position with respect to Hitler, to tell them why this decision was made. And I did it with the approval of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate and the Foreign Relations Committee of the House, and with the approval of the State Department, and with their assistance. So I was the son of a bitch that started the whole thing, and we are now being criticized not only for doing what we started, but something that was done with the approval of the Congress of the United States and everybody else concerned. That's how ridiculous it was.

W: The impact that they made with the program, you would think, would not be reversible by any disclaimers that were made later on, regardless of whether they were aired on television or not.

M: I think that's almost inevitably the case in dealing with the media. The initial shot is what takes hold of the mind. But I think CBS made a pretty good stab at it. They were doing their best to get the strongest possible persons to attack the picture. It was Burton Benjamin, the producer that I've worked with on many CBS pictures, who called me up and said, "Sam, I want to know your position on this." I said, "I think CBS is just crazy; I think the whole thing was nuts." He said, "Then you're absolutely opposed to what we did?" I said, "Absolutely. But I think it was crazy. I think it was bad judgement. It was ethically bad and it was dishonest." He said, "Will you go on the air and say that this is true?" I said, "Well, certainly, if you want me to." He said, "Well, we want you to very much, because we're in trouble over this thing." Well, when we got there that night the CBS moderator said to Silvester and myself, "We don't want to discuss the picture, we want to discuss the larger issue concerning the information." I said, "Look, what the hell do you think we're here for? You're either going to discuss the picture or there's not going to be a show." Silvester jumped in too and he said, "Look, bud, you better begin to understand things. That's what we're here for. It's your picture that started this and unless we say what we think about the picture, there isn't any show."

W: I remember even during the program, the moderator trying at least a couple of times to get the conversation off this specific subject of the picture and on to some broader issue, so to speak; but it always got back on the issue, I noticed--there was no avoiding it. In fact, that was the whole function and purpose of having everybody together there.

- M: Well, I think what happened was that they had not really told him what they had in mind, and he was worried about how he was going to look.
- W: Because he was representing CBS.
- M: Right. There could be not cutting of the picture because it just ran an hour. They either had to go with it as it was or it didn't go at all.
- W: They did get that cracked off. There seemed to be a noticeable number of articles in the weeklies and newspapers, and all said to a certain degree anyway that they had made a bad mistake in the way that was done. I thought that from the beginning.
- M: Even the Washington Post went after them, which is unusual.
- W: General, John Kenneth Galbraith wrote a book not long ago called How to Control the Military. It's his argument, an on-going argument, that the military establishment in this country is in bad need of stronger control by the federal government. I wanted to ask you what your reaction to that argument is, which is not any new argument by Galbraith--it's an on-going argument. Do you think that more stringent controls by the legislative arm of the government are needed to harness the military, so to speak?
- M: Well, I'll have to parse the question, really. I have not yet seen a book on the military written by a pacifist that dealt in realistic terms with the problem, and Galbraith is an out-and-out pacifist. He knows practically nothing about the military. So we go on from there. The military suffers from various diseases, one of them being elephantiasis, and I mean at the highest level. I remember running into General Cooke, who's a pretty well known Air Force commander with a great reputation also in the industrial world. This was about 1957, and we just

collided in the halls of the Pentagon. He said, "Marshall, you know there isn't anything wrong with this establishment that couldn't be corrected with a vacuum cleaner and a broom." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I mean sweeping 60% of them out of here. The thing is just top heavy with people." But this is not all the fault of the military by any means, because most of the excessive mushrooming in organization has occurred withing the secretariats. For example, in McNamara's shop, which was a few people only, he went in there and it became hundreds of people by the time he went out. This is true of every secretary's office. It's also true of the Joint Chiefs. What is it called--Parkinson's Disease? It affects all human organization.

W: The top heaviness is located in Washington, D.C.

M: That's right; not much elsewhere. For the last year, I have been inspecting the Army for General Westmoreland; I'm a special consultant. He called me in to go over the Army, to get my judgement of the present condition of the Army as to its training efficiency, levels of discipline, morale, etc., because I've had more experience with that over a longer time than probably anyone else. That has taken me from Army base to Army base. Yes, there is always, as in any operation, some fat, some operations that should not be there at all, some that are flubbed up; but I must say that most of the Army's troubles in the past year have come from extreme turbulence in the personnel situation, the too rapid overturn rather than the employment of people in jobs that were unnecessary. The fact was that a good many of these posts, such as Ft. Carson, couldn't be adequately manned for work that was absolutely essential. There were not enough people there. They couldn't do proper

maintenance, they could do no training at all; they didn't have enough people to do it. I have never been impressed with extraordinary _____ in the military system; to the contrary. And I guess I've seen as much of the general staff as anyone else. I do get it at the Pentagon because I guess I've had as many tours in the Pentagon as anyone; I've had nine or 10. I lost count of them after a while. The thing one notes is that about 20%-30% of the personnel is terribly overworked and the rest are terribly underworked.

W: An issue that is associated with this controlling of the military and its size, etc., is that each time the President makes a decision on a new phase in our present war, whether it's Cambodia or the harbor mines, or what have you, there is an instant negative reaction on the part of the legislators to this, because they were not consulted. The argument is that any action that is potentially explosive, as literally almost as the mining of the harbors, should not be the decision of the Commander in Chief, that the legislative branch ought to have a role in that. Is that a long, on-going problem?

M: It is not a valid argument. I remind you first of all that this is an election year, and therefore you see this objection is in an exaggerated form. I must say I have never know a time in our history when the opposition party played politics with the national interest in the same mean way they're doing it now. They take mean advantage of every possible situation. But you cannot conduct war this way. If this kind of thing were to be taken up with Congress, inevitably it would be leaked by the opposition to characters like Jack Anderson; and then they next thing you know, before you have a chance to pull the move, the enemy knows it. I should think that this would be plain enough to anyone. You cannot

conduct war this way. The trouble is that we've tried to conduct it this way, and that is why Vietnam has been such a fiasco. We telegraphed every punch right along the line; and, as I say, these objections are invalid even from the point of our history. Of course, this is not a so-called "declared war," but it is a war, and let's quit kidding ourselves about it. If you go right back to the time of the argument over the Constitution, you find out where Madison and the others are discussing how the powers should be stated, that only the Congress has the power to declare war. It's right there in their argument that it's got to be stated that way, because the President must have the power to make war. So the idea that this is unconstitutional is just bunk. This was their reasoning. This is stated in literature and in history.

W: This argument is a political football, then?

M: Sure. And it's reiterated because a good many politicians follow the old dictum that you can't fool all the people all the time, but you can fool all the people some of the time, etc. They twist it to suit their own purposes. They know that by reiteration they can fool enough people; let's put it in those terms.

W: You say this is the first time in your experience that you've seen in wartime a situation like this exist, where it is used like a political issue?

M: Oh, no, I didn't. I said it's used more viciously this time. It was used in the Korean War almost as viciously.

W: One final question that brings us back full circle to Vietnam. Do you care to venture an opinion on how you think it's all going to come out? Do you think it's all going to peter out, as some say, without any great satisfaction on anyone's part?

M: No, I really don't, because I'm not a tea leaf reader or a crystal ball gazer, and so much of this is on the laps of the gods. If you were counting on an enemy that had some kind of reason, some kind of compassion, some kind of a real interest in contributing something to the peace of the world, then you might have a different set of calculations; but these people are not that way. So I can't look ahead even far enough to make a good guess about how the next election is coming out, and hence I don't know how the presidency will stand after November. I am perfectly willing to make a forecast when it's based upon my knowledge of the factors in the situation. If I were to try to predict here what's coming, I would be doing some rank guessing, and you might as well be making the guess as asking me to do it. It's impossible.

W: I do take it, though, since you said earlier that this war has been a disaster, a fiasco for us, that we shouldn't have any hopes that there's going to be any kind of a satisfactory resolution to it after all this bungling on various fronts that has been accomplished in it.

M: It would be the most astonishing development during my lifetime to see a satisfactory resolution to the war in Indo-China. It need not have happened that way, but that's the position we're in. I think it's most unlikely. You can make just so many mistakes and then you've had it, and I think we've passed the point of successful recovery in this war.