

INTERVIEW WITH  
General Roscoe B. Woodruff

by

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Oral Historian

on

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for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



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This is an interview being conducted on March 16, 1972, in San Antonio, Texas, with General Roscoe B. Woodruff. The interviewer is Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff.

DR. BURG: Now first of all General Woodruff, when you were at West Point you were not in Eisenhower's company, is that right?

GEN. WOODRUFF: That's correct.

DR. BURG: So what kinds of contacts did you have with him at that time? Did you see him much?

GEN. WOODRUFF: No. We were on the football squad, I think, for the first year. Then Ike was injured, and actually I saw very, very little of him. Not only was I not in the same company, but I was in A Company and he was in F Company, as far removed as one could get as far as being in the barracks is concerned. So my reply would be--I actually saw very little of him, definitely nothing intimate.



DR. BURG: All right now with regard to the football experience, what position were you trying out for when you got there?

GEN. WOODRUFF: They thought they might make a tackle out of me. I might add that there was no particular demand for one hundred seventy pound tackles at that time.

BURG: Yes. I was about to tell my transcriber that I'm talking to a General who is still a slim, young looking man and, a tackle. What did they have in mind for Eisenhower at the time, do you remember?

WOODRUFF: Yes, he was a back, a half back if I'm not mistaken.

BURG: I see, and when you weren't grumping with pain I suppose you'd occasionally get to see him run by.

WOODRUFF: Well, I suppose so. We're now in a place where I remember no details at all. Except I might say that, as has been published many times I'm sure, that after Ike was injured he became an assistant coach or something of the sort. I might say that I went on to become what was then called a pinch-kicker. Now he's a kicking specialist, a place kicker. So there was almost no connection even on the football field.

BURG: Did he stay in that capacity much beyond one year, General, do you remember that?



WOODRUFF: Yes, it is my impression. I think he was injured as a yearling. I think he eventually became the coach of what was known as the Cullum Hall squad, which was about corresponding

to a freshmen team. Although upper classmen, too light we'll say, to participate in varsity athletics played for the Cullum Hall squad.

BURG: How do we spell Cullum?

WOODRUFF: C-u-l-l-u-m.

BURG: All right.



WOODRUFF: Cullum is one of the old timers about whom Cullum Hall is named. It had the dance hall when we were there.

BURG: Well, was that Cullum Hall squad like a Junior Varsity squad?

WOODRUFF: It would be more or less that I think, yes. It for instance would occasionally play high school teams in the neighborhood. So far as I know it played no freshman team. Actually it was not a freshman team as I mentioned before. For instance, General [Hubert Reilly] Harmon, the first superintendent of the Air Academy, I think was quarterback on that team. He must have weighed about one hundred and forty five pounds at that time. I think later he made the varsity though.

BURG: So you have no real recollections of Eisenhower the coach from this period of time?

WOODRUFF: No.



BURG: Do you recollect ever being in the same class with him? I realize classes were fairly small at that time.

WOODRUFF: No, no, I don't. But I might say that as far as graduation standing was concerned, we were within, oh, I think six files of each other or something of the sort. But I remember nothing at all about him. As a matter of fact, I remember little not only about Ike but about any of the other classmates with whom I should have been associated better.

BURG: Well the chances are that there was nothing as far as you were concerned, being in a totally different company and quite removed from him even physically at West Point, about the man that set itself in your mind.

WOODRUFF: No.

BURG: Good enough. Now you leave West Point in 1915. Where does your service career begin?

WOODRUFF: In the 9th Infantry at Laredo, Texas. I was assigned down there.

BURG: The 9th Infantry was actually not part of a division at that time?

WOODRUFF: There were no division organizations then.



BURG: Not till World War I. This is the regiment that was in China and later became part of the 2nd Infantry Division.

WOODRUFF: That's right.

BURG: And many of you did come down to Texas, if I remember correctly. Eisenhower came down here; I think General [John W.] Leonard said he came down here. I think he found General [William Hood] Simpson already down here. It seems to me he came into Simpson's company. But you went to the 9th. What was your next duty with the 9th? Were you with them on the Mexican border?

WOODRUFF: Oh, yes, I was with them on the Mexican border until they marched on foot up here. Then we went to Syracuse, New York--stood up to organize two other outfits. I was commander of the company in part of World War I in France, of the 9th.

BURG: As a Captain?

WOODRUFF: Yes.



BURG: So you were one of those who actually got combat experience during World War I?

WOODRUFF: Yes, some. I went to the first course at the Command and General Staff School over there. And then in May 1918 on a transfer, a mutual exchange shall we say, of officers between people over there and from the department I then came back and was in G-2 of the War Department for the rest of the war. So, for instance, I wasn't in the Meuse-Argonne or anything of the sort. But I did get enough combat experience to satisfy me for the moment.

BURG: I would imagine you did because the 9th was with the 2nd Division in France.

WOODRUFF: That's right.

BURG: So you had a marine regiment and--

WOODRUFF: The 9th and 23rd Infantry formed a brigade. And the 5th and 6th marines formed a brigade, and that was the total



infantry of the 2nd Division.

BURG: I see. I guess the 38th Regiment earned a reputation and came into a division later.

WOODRUFF: That's right.



BURG: Now you mentioned the Command and General Staff course in France. Now perhaps we ought to make some reference to that; not everyone will understand that, and I do not understand that.

WOODRUFF: About Thanksgiving, '17, a Command and General Staff School was organized at Langres in France.

BURG: May I ask for the spelling of that, please?

WOODRUFF: L-a-n-g-r-e-s.

BURG: Thank you.

WOODRUFF: The Commandant was an American Brigadier. It was staffed by French, British and Americans, most of them later with some combat experience that they had gotten other wheres. It was a three months course. The name of the thing indicates what its purposes was--to train people for staff duties. I happened to be specialized in the intelligence service.

BURG: How did that come about, General?

WOODRUFF: Well, it was just because a certain number of people were assigned--for instance some to the operations, some to the training, some to the intelligence, some to the supply and so on as it applied to the European Theater.

BURG: And you had drawn that kind of duty after leading an infantry company?



WOODRUFF: That's correct. And then after it was over I might say that I then, as part of the course, spent a couple of weeks with a British division in Ypres Salient in Belgium. Other people had gone also to units in the front line to get experience. Then I came back to the regiment and from there was transferred to Washington.

BURG: Just for the record I'll ask you for the name of that British division if you happen to have it.

WOODRUFF: It was the 8th Imperial Division. They insisted on the Imperial part of it to distinguish between the Canadians or the ANZACs [Australia-New Zealand Army Corps] or anything of the sort. The 8th Imperial British Division.

BURG: Yes, I think I have that division's history written later on during the war.

WOODRUFF: Well, if I might impose a comment here, I was very much pleased with the greeting I got there. My treatment and so on was very, very helpful. And I was only a pain in the neck for them, simply an observer. I was at division headquarters, that was all.



BURG: And did they take you on inspection trips on the line too?

WOODRUFF: Oh, yes. Well, one period they'd taken me to the trenches up there. Sometimes they were about as long as a hand grenade distance apart, and on several occasions I was taken up to take a look at the sunlight. We got there at what the British called "just before first shooting light" hopefully so we could get on top of the ground and look around, and the Germans couldn't see us accurately enough to put down anything on top of us. And it worked out very nicely; it was quite an education to find out about it. In other words, for about ten or fifteen minutes, we could get out on top and look around and after that you better get under cover.

BURG: The light coming up behind the Germans and just before it

illuminated you so that they could get a shot at you.

WOODRUFF: Yes, that's right.

BURG: Well, I'm going to look at that divisional history and just see if by chance the historian of the division mentioned American observers coming out.

WOODRUFF: Well, it's possible. No doubt others went up for the same purpose that I did. I ran onto an interesting thing. I ramble here a little; I hope it won't bother you.

BURG: I'll bring you back.



WOODRUFF: Not long ago in one of the military magazines here in the States, there was published a story of a front flying lieutenant in the 8th Imperial British Division in the Syrian. I have the man's name some place. I thought it was very interesting, and I wrote to him, and I got a very nice reply. He remembered the names of [Major] General [W. C. G.] Heneker who was the commander. It was a most interesting thing to me.

BURG: Yes, indeed. It would be, indeed.

WOODRUFF: End of rambling.

BURG: I just got that divisional history out of storage, it's been back on the west coast in the state of Washington; so I haven't really refamiliarized myself with it, but I will. Now when you come back to Washington with G-2, you come back with what rank?

WOODRUFF: I was a Major.

BURG: You're in Washington. General Eisenhower was, at that point, at Camp Colt, Maryland, I think, or Oglethorpe.

WOODRUFF: I'm not sure, but he was there some place. It seemed to me there was a tank outfit up in Pennsylvania that he might have been with.

BURG: Yes.



WOODRUFF: Well, anyway he was here in the States, yes.

BURG: And you did not make contact at that point?

WOODRUFF: No.

BURG: At the end of the war, were you still with G-2 in Washington?

WOODRUFF: Yes.

BURG: And still at the temporary rank of Major or had you gone up to Lieutenant Colonel?

WOODRUFF: No, I was Major. Matter of fact, I was busted a little bit later to be a Captain due to the reduction of the forces and so on. No, I did not become a Lieutenant Colonel in World War I.

BURG: As I understand virtually all of you went back down to a Captain's rank.

WOODRUFF: That's correct.



BURG: Following G-2, what was your next service?

WOODRUFF: After a year up there I was ordered down here where I became G-2 of the old Southern department which had the control of the whole Mexican border exclusive of California.

BURG: Based here at San Antonio?

WOODRUFF: Based here at Sam Houston.

BURG: And how long did that duty last?

WOODRUFF: Till March '21 when I was ordered to Panama.

BURG: What was the unit in Panama to which you were attached?

WOODRUFF: Oh, I was sort of a wanderer. I was first executive officer to the Panama area depot supply layout. A few months later I was assigned a battalion in the 33rd Infantry, and a few months after that I went to the Panama Canal department as G-2, I guess it was. From there to the Panama Canal division on the staff and then back to Quarry Heights and that ended my two years down there. Then I came to Oswego, New York as company commander of the 28th Infantry.

BURG: So your service there ends about 1924?



WOODRUFF: That's correct.

BURG: And did not overlap Eisenhower's service down there?

WOODRUFF: Yes, he was there, but they were across the canal at Camp something. The name escapes me.

BURG: Camp Gaillard?

WOODRUFF: Gaillard, yes. And we saw very little of them. The

communications were very poor. As a matter of fact, they had to cross the canal by barge I think or something of the sort. I was at Quarry Heights and at Corozal which were on the same side of the isthmus but on the other side of the canal. So we saw very little of them. I knew he was there; he was Fox Conner's Chief of Staff I think or something of the sort down there.

BURG: Very closely associated with him?



WOODRUFF: If my recollection is correct.

BURG: You heard very little about Eisenhower at that time?

WOODRUFF: Well, only as one would hear about classmates. There's been picayunish things that Captain's and Major's and so on would try to get to. I'll put it this way--there was nothing particular that I would remember on a lot of things.

BURG: What kind of a reputation did Fox Conner have at that time? Do you remember?

WOODRUFF: Yes. He was an extremely competent officer, one of the top flight people. He had done exceptionally well in World War I, I can't remember what it was, I think it was a staff job of some kind. I did not know him well except that he was one of



the comers.

BURG: Known to be so to you and your classmates.

WOODRUFF: Definitely. Well, it was not only our classmates but in the army.

BURG: Would you have considered assignment to his command to have been a particular boost in your career. Would you have viewed that as an extremely fortunate break for you had it happened to you?

WOODRUFF: Not at the time. Let me explain. I had little to do with my assignments. In other words, if they told me to do this, I did it. What I'm trying to get at is, I didn't look ahead. Very few people do really.

BURG: That's true.



WOODRUFF: And I think Ike did. I'm guessing you see, maybe as a result of his close association with Fox Conner, I'm quite sure that Fox Conner urged him, urged Ike to do certain things. In other words, I have a feeling that Fox Conner might have been the advisor--the advisor that got Ike into looking forward

to his own career. Now we can pick that up later on.

BURG: I know what you speak of--that moment for whatever reason when you do begin to see yourself further ahead down the trail and you begin to plan and direct yourself to some goal. Did that ultimately come to you through help and guidance from some older officer?



WOODRUFF: No. I might say here as a matter of opinion only of course, I think in that respect Ike was far ahead of most of his contemporaries. In other words, I think he matured faster on that particular thing than almost any of the rest of us who were more or less content to let nature take its course shall we say or just go ahead and enjoy the service.

BURG: A very thoughtful observation. I thank you for that. It's good to hear that.

WOODRUFF: Well, as I say now, this is only my own slant on the thing, but that would be my idea of the thing. This might not fit into this, but most of Ike's service was in places which would do him some good. I don't say that in a derogatory fashion at all. He was just bright enough to realize what it was. For instance, he was, if I'm not mistaken, on the burial committee or

something of the sort, stationed in Washington.

BURG: The Battlefield Monuments.

WOODRUFF: That's what I'm trying to think of.

BURG: With [General] John Pershing.

WOODRUFF: In other words he was in Washington, and I think most of the time the rest of the people were out with units or something of the sort. End of discussion on that particular subject.

BURG: Well, I was thinking along those lines because I wondered whether it seemed to you at that time that your career was adrift.

WOODRUFF: It didn't occur to me. As a matter of fact, as I look back on it, not with any particular reluctance or anything of that sort, but I was very remiss in not spotting a situation such as Ike apparently did early in the game, you see. I don't know whether it would have made much difference; but, for instance, that time in Washington I saw very few people, very few seniors shall we say. I think at that time there were six regular



officers in the whole G-2 section of the General Staff or something like that. I didn't go around and hob-nob with Congressmen or anything of the sort.

BURG: Now was Mrs. Woodruff with you, by the way, in Panama?

WOODRUFF: Oh, yes.

BURG: So the two of you lived pretty much the typical kind of life of young army officers.

WOODRUFF: I might say that Mrs. Woodruff is an army brat. Her father was the class of '87 from the Military Academy. He was in command of Ft. MacIntosh down on the border when I was with the 9th Infantry, and we were married down there in the commanding officer's quarters.



BURG: Mrs. Woodruff's father was one class behind John Pershing?

WOODRUFF: That's correct.

BURG: So as you look back on that Panama experience, here I'm striving to get comparisons of what was it like for the Eisenhowers living down there, what stands out in your mind as the kind of thing you might do for relaxation while you were in

Panama? What did the two of you enjoy most to do?

WOODRUFF: I like to go fishing.

BURG: Did Mrs. Woodruff like to go fishing too?

WOODRUFF: No, she's not a fisherwoman at all. Well, I don't know, actually I think nothing much stood out. There was a lot of social life down there of course; we're so completely dependent on our own activities down there. The communications were not good with the States, for instance. In other words, a small garrison down there at the time, or a series of small garrisons, Amador, Quarry Heights, Corozal and so on. But I don't recall anything.

BURG: The dances?



WOODRUFF: Oh, yes, dances and parties.

BURG: Picnics?

WOODRUFF: Well, yes, and then people would go riding and so on. I would say it was quite a typical thing.

BURG: Automobiles available for your use in some quantity?

WOODRUFF: Well, we had a Ford down there. Yes, there were some of them. There was not much place you could go you see. There was no bridge across the canal. In other words, you couldn't drive across to the west shore at all. You couldn't go very far to the east because when you got out about fifteen miles you were just in a swamp.

BURG: A feeling of detachment from the United States and a feeling of not knowing really what was going on up there, do you remember?

WOODRUFF: Oh, we didn't feel badly about the proposition; we just accepted life as it came.

BURG: Did you and Mrs. Woodruff have children then?



WOODRUFF: Yes, we had a son born when we were stationed in Washington at the tail end of World War I. And a daughter born in Panama who has trouble when she crosses the International border because she's known as a Panamaniac sometimes. In other words, she has to establish her American citizenship.

BURG: Now Mrs. Woodruff had the girl in Panama?

WOODRUFF: That's correct.

BURG: Mrs. Eisenhower had a son but had the son up here at Ft. Sam Houston I think.

WOODRUFF: I'm not familiar with that. .

BURG: You don't know the circumstances.

WOODRUFF: No, I don't know anything about it.

BURG: I don't know either. It may have been a matter of health. She had lost the young lad, the one who died at the age of three. And I believe it was John's birth.

WOODRUFF: I'm not familiar with that.



BURG: Well, I just wondered, and I wanted to confirm your wife had her baby in Panama at that time?

WOODRUFF: Yes. Well now let me make a comment here. Have you seen the series of five-year books gotten out by members of the class?

BURG: Yes, we have some of those.

WOODRUFF: Well, now, I was going to suggest that information

such as that, if it's available in print, would probably be there and no place else.

BURG: Yes.

WOODRUFF: I'm not familiar with it at all, but I just suggest that. You have the stuff available; so you can have somebody dig it out perhaps.

BURG: Well, the thing that I wanted to be sure of was that there were medical facilities, acceptable medical facilities for you there.

WOODRUFF: Oh, yes.



BURG: And you were not at all disturbed about her having the baby in Panama.

WOODRUFF: No.

BURG: When you left Panama, what was the next duty station for you?

WOODRUFF: [Fort] Ontario, Oswego, New York where I was company commander of the 28th.



BURG: 28th Regiment?

WOODRUFF: 28th Regiment, yes.

BURG? So you're still with troops?

WOODRUFF: Oh, yes. I might say that my duty in Panama except for about three months was all on staff jobs which didn't please me much, but it was acceptable. Of course I couldn't do anything about it.

BURG: But you're getting sort of a balanced career thus far.

WOODRUFF: Well, I think it would amount to that.



BURG: Now was the Command and General Staff School for you, during the '20s, did you go there?

WOODRUFF: Oh, yes. From Ontario I went to [Fort] Benning [Georgia] for the one year course.

BURG: The infantry school.

WOODRUFF: Then to Leavenworth and took that course. Then stayed there on the faculty for four years. This brought me up to '31.

BURG: As I told General [John W.] Leonard yesterday, it rather amuses me that those of you who had served in combat on the western front leading infantry in battle had to go to Benning to take the infantry course. But you were not at battalion level, perhaps as a company commander on the western front you felt differently about Benning.

WOODRUFF: Well, in the first place I was glad to go to Benning; I wanted to go there. As a matter of fact I had been asked if I didn't want to try out for the infantry rifle team, the Camp Perry thing. And I said, "No, I want to go to the infantry school." Because by that time the tactical lessons of World War I had more or less congealed you see. In other words, they knew what the hell they were doing by that time. They were teaching as best they could and there had been developments in the five or six years since the war. I thought it was a fine course.

BURG: So you were excited about going then?



WOODRUFF: I enjoyed it, well, I enjoyed the military part of it, but living conditions were not good. At Leavenworth it was quite an education because that was even more advanced there.

Also I might add that it was a good place to meet an awful lot of classmates--about the last place in the army where you met a lot of classmates of other branches because at that time the army was a battalion here, a squadron there, a regiment some place else you see, and you didn't get to see these people.

BURG: Now when did you reach Leavenworth then?

WOODRUFF: In '25.



BURG: You were there in '25. Was Eisenhower there?

WOODRUFF: He had just graduated from there. I was a year after him.

BURG: Where did you come out in your Leavenworth class?

WOODRUFF: I was number four in a class of two hundred. He was number one in his class if I'm not mistaken.

BURG: Yes. And as you yourself have indicated, it looks as though it was Fox Conner who turned him and made a scholar out of him and gave him direction.

WOODRUFF: That is my impression. Now I hope you will be able to dig up more on that, that is just to see whether I was right

or wrong. But, as a matter of fact, I think a lot of Ike's associates had the same feeling because Ike was such a tremendous admirer of General Conner.

BURG: We're now trying to pursue General Conner's military library. We're trying to see if we can run it down, even a list of its titles, to have some idea of what did Conner have at his disposal to offer Eisenhower to read.

Now when you got to Leavenworth he had just graduated. Did the instructors at Leavenworth or any of your Leavenworth class discuss Eisenhower's record from the year before? Do you remember talking about that?



WOODRUFF: I sort of hate to say this, but they say one of the reasons he came out number one was because he spent such a lot of time in the faculty offices at the headquarters building. But that's neither here nor there. He was getting an education, and he was getting knowledge and asking questions about problems. But that's all I remember about him there.

BURG: There were actually people when you got there who said, "He had stayed in touch with the people who were on the faculty."

WOODRUFF: That's my recollection of it.

BURG: Was it said maliciously or was it said in good humor?

WOODRUFF: No, no, no, just casually, just casually. Ike was very well liked incidentally as a cadet. They would just jokingly say, "Well he spends enough time with the faculty" or something like that. I don't know what it was.

BURG: Something that you figured he probably wouldn't have done earlier in his career but was now--

WOODRUFF: Well, no. I wouldn't go so far as to say that. I don't know about that.

BURG: Now you stayed on and taught there which must have been a very nice thing for you. Something that must have made you proud, I guess you might say.

WOODRUFF: Yes. It was a tremendously interesting thing. It was not an easy job, at least I didn't find it so. And as I say, I got to see an awful lot of people, and I hope I taught some of the people odds and ends of stuff, like Hap [General Henry H.] Arnold and a lot of the people who came out very high



ranking later on in their career.

BURG: Now when you went to Leavenworth, what was your rank?

WOODRUFF: I was a Major.

BURG: And then you taught there as a Major?

WOODRUFF: That's right.

BURG: You were there for a year. Did you teach then there for four more years?

WOODRUFF: Four years, that's right.



BURG: Five years in all. May I ask the subject or subjects that you generally taught?

WOODRUFF: Some of the people were in a section, we'll say the command section, and were limited to that particular stuff. Now I was primarily in the intelligence section. But occasionally I would be tossed into a command conference or something like that, primarily with intelligence stuff, though. And then a lot of this stuff there was in, you might say, a committee in which there was no question about what section you represented.

BURG: Sort of a syndicate kind of work.

WOODRUFF: That's true.

[Interruption as cassette is changed]

BURG: Do you remember anyone else on the staff with you who later distinguished himself in any particular way? Some of the students that came through the school?

WOODRUFF: Oh, there must have been. There must have been a lot of them. I don't recall. That's been quite a while ago. If I took a roster and ran through this thing I would find people; a lot of people came out who were very high ranking. See at that time they were Majors, some of them only Captains. Most of the people who went there though were field officers as students.



BURG: Do you think of yourself as having at that time in your career sort of a scholar's mind? A scholarly interest in the Army?

WOODRUFF: No. Not scholarly at all. Sometime ago a study was made of the first Captain, the senior military cadet in each class at the Academy. Well, I happened to be that in my class. So they were asking questions about this business,

and most of the class who replied had gone to the Military Academy to get an education. I found that I went to the Military Academy to be a soldier. I don't say that as a derogatory about the studious people at all because I'm sure that my family sent me there to get an education because in central Iowa there wasn't much money then. But I was not a student; I didn't pretend to be a student except as it affected my military business.

BURG: You enjoyed the life as a professional, career soldier?

WOODRUFF: That's correct. I never wanted to be a stock and bond salesman or anything of the sort.

BURG: I think you said that in '31 you finished your service with the Command and General Staff School as an instructor.

WOODRUFF: Yes.

BURG: What came next for you then, sir?

WOODRUFF: Army War College. That's in Washington, of course.

BURG: I'm trying to remember who was there at that time in the Army War College. Eisenhower was not there with you?





WOODRUFF: No. Willie [William D.] Connor was the commandant and Buckner was the assistant commandant.

BURG: Simon Bolivar [Buckner]?



WOODRUFF: Simon Bolivar, yes. There again I would have to have a roster, and I could then give personal comments if I had any.

BURG: Well, when the transcript comes back for you to look over and make any changes or additions if you wish, names may have come back to you, and all you have to do is write them in.

WOODRUFF: I could check them down. One thing that impressed me, Georgie [George S.] Patton was a member of the class there. And one year we were asked to make contributions if we cared to to a big pool tournament to be held. And after it was over with, the president of the class at the class meeting said that he wanted to thank the people for what they had done, that it was a very successful thing, and that he was particularly grateful to Major Patton who had helped a great deal. And Georgie got up and said, "Well, I can't say it was so much my fault. It was largely the fault of my careful selection of my wife's ancestors." [Laughter] But, no, there doesn't come to mind now any of the men who were there.

BURG: What came next for you then after those four years?

WOODRUFF: I had been, incidentally, trying to get to the department tactics in the Military Academy. When I left the infantry school I wanted to get back to the Military Academy. After the War College, I was assigned to the faculty at West Point.

BURG: Teaching infantry tactics?

WOODRUFF: Well, the tactical department not only teaches tactics but is also responsible for the conduct and discipline of the corps.

BURG: I see, he's a TAC.



WOODRUFF: He's the TAC, that's right. I was there then for the next four years, till '36.

BURG: So again probably very little contact if any with Eisenhower?

WOODRUFF: I don't remember a thing, but wasn't he in the Philippines at that time?

BURG: Yes, part of the time he was in Washington; he was there

during the Bonus March. And then goes with [General Douglas] MacArthur, to the Philippines.

WOODRUFF: Yes. Well, to answer your question, no, he was not there.

BURG: And you're up there teaching in the Military Academy.

WOODRUFF: Yes.

BURG: When that service for you ends, what is your next duty post?

WOODRUFF: I was then assigned to the War Department General Staff, the Operations and Training Division.

BURG: Was this WPD?



WOODRUFF: No, that's the War Plans Division. That's just what their name implies, the training end of the thing. The organization and training end was G-3. War Plans was 5, I guess or something of the sort. And the last year there I was Chief of the Training Branch. Things were happening pretty much then because I left there in '40, and we were watching the development of World War II.

BURG: Yes, you were. And Eisenhower evidently was watching it in the Philippines too because he makes a remark I think to MacArthur that, looking at what was happening, he could see what was coming up, and I think he wanted to get back. He wanted to get some time in with the troops. So he comes back to the West Coast to California then ultimately up to the state of Washington.

WOODRUFF: [Fort] Lewis, yes. He was up there.

BURG: Now how about you? You were leaving the Washington environment too about 1940?

WOODRUFF: That's right. Came down here and was assigned to the 23rd Infantry right here on the post.

BURG: So you're back with the 2nd Division.



WOODRUFF: Yes.

BURG: Now were you still here when he came down to be Deputy Chief of Staff of the 3rd Army?

WOODRUFF: Yes, it was the 4th Army I think. Was it the 3rd?

All right, I won't worry about that. I was here, yes. On

pearl Harbor day I commanded the 23rd here, and we had been in the Louisiana Maneuvers where Ike at that time I think was Chief of Staff.

BURG: Yes, because in about a month he became Chief of Staff.

WOODRUFF: That's right. Being a regimental commander up in the Louisiana swamps, I didn't see very much of the people at Army Headquarters. I don't remember having seen him then at all. He was getting himself broken in to a very difficult job.

BURG: Were you in the same force at the Louisiana Maneuvers?

WOODRUFF: Yes.



BURG: You were with [Walter E.] Krueger's command?

WOODRUFF: That's right.

BURG: And if I remember correctly you gentlemen defeated [Ben] Lear's group.

WOODRUFF: Well, it was all set up for us. The umpires had the thing all set up so this thing would happen a certain way. No matter what you did would make much change in it. But I think

the general scheme was that our army handled it the best.

BURG: At the time you don't recall any commentary among yourselves in the 2nd Division about the 3rd Army's Chief of Staff.

WOODRUFF: No.

BURG: You don't receive phone calls from him during this period of time.

WOODRUFF: No, no. If I'm not mistaken that headquarters was clear down on the coast. And we were, oh, ninety miles from there or something of the sort, I think. So there was no contact. If Ike made visits of inspection, I don't remember a thing about it. I don't think he did. He was probably so tied down there I think he was quite right in not trying to get around.



BURG: Now just a few months after those maneuvers, war comes. Within about five days after the war starts Marshall calls Eisenhower to Washington to WPD [War Plans Division]. (I think that's the correct set of initials.) Were you still commanding the 23rd at that time?

WOODRUFF: Yes. I commanded that until early in January when I got a star and was assigned as Assistant Division Commander to the 77th Division which was then being organized at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

BURG: You were a full Colonel with the 23rd?

WOODRUFF: Yes. I had gotten my temporary Colonel, see, in the summer of '41.

BURG: So like Eisenhower you, too, are starting up the ladder. Both of you must have your Brigadier stars just about at about the same time.

WOODRUFF: More or less I imagine.

BURG: Within a month or so I think of one another.

WOODRUFF: I guess so.

BURG: And you're with the 77th. He is with War Plans, OPD, I guess it became. Do you remember anything about that period? Is there any connection between the two of you or contact?

WOODRUFF: No.



BURG: Anything that you recollect said about his going with Marshall? Any of your colleagues discuss it.

WOODRUFF: I don't remember a thing about it. I might say that our operations were entirely under, what was then called, the ground forces--General [Leslie J.] McNair's outfit at the War College. We were quite close to them and quite remote from the War Department as far as any close contact was concerned.

BURG: Do you stay with the 77th then?

WOODRUFF: Yes, as a matter of fact I got another star and was put in command of the 77th Division about in June of '42 and was with Jackson in the maneuver area in Louisiana and for about a month in Arizona. Then I was transferred to the 7th Corps at Jacksonville.

BURG: Now when you were transferred to the 7th Corps, General, you were then a Major-General?

WOODRUFF: I was a Major-General, yes.

BURG: This is late 1942?





WOODRUFF: No, it was about April '43.

BURG: And you went to that corps in what capacity, sir?

WOODRUFF: I was the corps commander.

BURG: The North African thing is going on. What's the next move for you then?

WOODRUFF: I took it overseas in October of '43 in southern England and was there in command of it until February '44. Then was transferred to the 19th Corps for a month, and then suddenly found myself back in the United States.

BURG: In that period before you went to the 19th and really up to the time that you were in southern England, is there any exchange of communications with Eisenhower? Does he ever write to you as a classmate?

WOODRUFF: Oh, no, no. I saw him in England a few times.

BURG: Would you tell me about those, please?

WOODRUFF: Well, there wasn't much to be told. He came up from Africa, I suppose you'll know when it is, I don't remember, but it was, as I remember in very early '43, '44.



BURG: '44. He'd gone back to the States; I think it was probably January of '44.

WOODRUFF: Well, he had, yes. He had taken over, and I remember that all the senior commanders were called into London, and he gave a little talk on what he hoped would be accomplished and so on. And then on a couple of occasions perhaps, he came down to my outfit which was down south of Salisbury.

BURG: This was when you had the 7th Corps?



WOODRUFF: 7th Corps. Generally he was accompanied by [Air Chief Marshal, Sir Arthur] Tedder and [General Sir Bernard L.] Montgomery and sometimes other people. This was purely an inspection thing that lasted maybe two hours or something, not very much time.

BURG: When he first saw you, the first meeting where he talked with you all a little bit about what he hoped would be accomplished, was there a chance for him to talk with you and to reminisce a little bit about your experiences together?

WOODRUFF: No, no.

BURG: Did he ever in any of those meetings hark back to the fact that you were classmates?

WOODRUFF: No, I don't think so.

BURG: Can you give me your own thumbnail impressions as you saw these men, your impressions of Tedder and of Montgomery?

WOODRUFF: I thought Montgomery was an awful stuffed shirt. On the other hand the practical people say that he was apparently the only hero the British people had at that time.

BURG: The only winner.



WOODRUFF: There were a hell of a lot of fine guys in the British service contemporaries of his, but he was the hero. He was the spectacular guy; he was the man that wore the funny hats so long. He gave us a talk that I felt that our people received because we were Allies. He was always talking about "tidying up the battlefield" and I notice that statement has been quoted many times--when he was tidying up the battlefield in North Africa and so on. He was a winning General so he should get credit for it, but personally he was very difficult. When he

came around on these inspection trips, I'd take him around and thought he was, this is pretty hard for a Major-General to say this about a General like himself, but I thought he was a kind of a stuffed shirt. Tedder I didn't see so much of, but I thought he was a very fine guy. He seemed to get along with people in what he was doing and very pleasant and capable.

BURG: Now if I understand correctly [Leonard] Gerow, [Willis Dale] Crittenberger, and you had corps that were going to be used in the assault?

WOODRUFF: That's right.

BURG: Then the decision was made, if I understand it correctly, that all three of you had never actually lead corps in combat and that it might be risky to use all three of you in an assault landing without combat experience.

WOODRUFF: That was the story I heard.



BURG: Now you smile at me and indicate there's another story.

WOODRUFF: It didn't seem to affect Gerow who was very well known by the infantry school. Gerow was a good man and I--let me explain. I'm not mad at anybody. While I question the decisions

of some people up top as to personnel and things like that, I'm convinced they were absolutely sincere in what they were doing.

BURG: Who were the people whose actions you question?

WOODRUFF: [Omar] Bradley and Eisenhower were the people who made the decisions I think. To some extent, Courtney Hodges perhaps. Yes, your comment that they were relieving a bunch of people to get in people with combat--for instance Collins took the 7th Corps.

BURG: Was this J. Lawton?



WOODRUFF: J. Lawton Collins took the 7th Corps. Then after a month with the 19th I was relieved by [Charles Harrison] Corlett who had been in the Aleutians operation and was quite ill, and I think had to be relieved very quickly after he got over there. So that ended my European experience.

BURG: Let me ask you to look back. With what kind of feelings, were you--

WOODRUFF: I was completely crushed. I hadn't the foggiest idea of what the hell had been going on. Nobody had made the suggestion to me, "Woody you ought to be doing this;" "You ought to be doing

that." I knew Bradley very well incidentally; we had hunted and fished together and so on. And one day Hodges came down and spent the night and talked about this and that, and, I think the next day, Bradley came down and told me that I was being sent back to the States.

BURG: And Bradley, of course, a classmate of yours.

WOODRUFF: Oh, yes.



BURG: And of Ike's. So he came down and gave you the news.

WOODRUFF: He gave me the word for which I admired him very much. He knew it was going to hurt. But anyway I then came back and had command of a division over in Louisiana again for several months, and then I went out to the Pacific.

BURG: Bradley makes a very nice remark about you and Crittenger, both of you in his book.

WOODRUFF: Well, Bradley's a good guy. He was the military man you know. With all due respect to Ike, Ike was the conciliatory man you might say, the diplomat to keep the free French and the British and the Americans and this, that, and the other people together and to try to take care of George Patton and Montgomery

for which I sympathize with him like everything.

BURG: You figure, looking back on it, that having to cope with that was not a pleasant job?

WOODRUFF: No.

BURG: Bradley you felt was perhaps the better tactician?

WOODRUFF: Oh, there's no question in my mind about it, no question.

BURG: In handling military situations?



WOODRUFF: Well, the peculiar part of it is that neither Ike nor Bradley had any experience in World War I, you know.

BURG: Well, I knew Ike hadn't. Bradley too had missed combat experience?

WOODRUFF: Yes. But in their own particular line they were experts, shall we say, and they had gumption enough to pick up what they could along the way and had very good staffs, I think.

BURG: We've already spoken about Tedder. Did you ever meet [Major General, Sir Francis W.] Guingand?

WOODRUFF: If I did, he made no impression at all.

BURG: Frederick Morgan?

WOODRUFF: Morgan, I met, yes. Now let me get my wits about me here for a minute. (Well, it wouldn't be apropos at this time, just take up room.) Except that I was on a hush-hush job during part of the time I was with the 7th Corps. We were trying to convince the Germans that we were going to make an attack in the autumn of 1944 and so on. I think Morgan was at that time a very high ranking somebody at the War Office in London. I'm sure I met him during my wanderings in this business.



BURG: I do want on the record that Bradley's remark was that, as far as he was concerned, you and Crittenberger, both, had done magnificently later on, and he confesses he thinks it was wrong--that they probably could have gone very well with the two of you and Gerow commanding those corps. I thought it was a most generous, perhaps even you know him best, a typical Bradley gracious word about you.

WOODRUFF: Yes. I didn't remember that he had mentioned anything about the fact that he could probably have gone along with the



people who had been relieved, but he did say that we, both Crittenberger and I, had done very well in different areas.

BURG: He thinks it would have been safe to have gone with you after all, but, as you have just said, the decision seems to have been made as far as you're concerned with complete sincerity by Eisenhower and Bradley.

WOODRUFF: May I interpolate, I think the decision was made by George Marshall.

BURG: Oh, you do?



WOODRUFF: Now that's only my personal opinion; I know nothing; I couldn't support it with anything else at all; but I think that's the idea.

BURG: You think the decision was made at even a higher level.

WOODRUFF: I think maybe it was suggested at least by General Marshall. I could be wrong about this. One thing that supports it is the fact that Marshall and Gerow were just like this.

BURG: I see, very close.

WOODRUFF: They had been together at Benning for a long time.

In other words, Marshall knew Gerow's characteristics. He knew very little about me in spite of the fact that I'd been with him in the Department of General Staff there.

BURG: How long had you been with him, General?

WOODRUFF: Well, I was there four years, of course, and he was there I think the last of those three, maybe only the last two. I'm not sure about that. Very difficult man I thought to get along with.

BURG: Marshall was?

WOODRUFF: Yes.

BURG: Reserved? Unapproachable?

WOODRUFF: Unpredictable, unpredictable.



BURG: Unpredictable?

WOODRUFF: In my own opinion. Turn the machine off for a minute, will you?

BURG: Well, why don't we just leave it in and you can take it out yourself if you like?

WOODRUFF: Well, all right. The apropos of that business, Bedell Smith was Secretary of the General Staff during the period just before World War II. Bedell came down with a paper from General Marshall's office to see Johnny Hodge who was my desk mate in the department. And Hodge was a rather effervescent sort of a fellow who spoke what he thought, and he said, "Well, I turned that thing in twice. What the hell does the old man want?" And Bedell said, "Johnny, I don't know." So that's one of my recollections about the situation at the time.

BURG: From what I know about Bedell Smith it would take quite a bit to have him unsure of what had to be done.

WOODRUFF: Well, I was his deputy when he was in command of the 1st Army there in New York. He was a very, very fine guy to work with, a very sound individual. His sense of humor was, I thought, a little bit warped occasionally, but he was a very fine guy.

BURG: How do you mean? What struck him funny?



WOODRUFF: Well, nothing. [Laughter] That I should explain. He was definitely not well, definitely not well at the time.

BURG: Now this is actually from pre-war or early wartime?

WOODRUFF: Oh, no, no, no, no. This was in about 1950 when I was stationed at Governor's Island.

BURG: This was post-war period?

WOODRUFF: That's right.

BURG: Well, I think his health was a little shaky was it not in Europe?

WOODRUFF: Yes, that's right.



BURG: Did he remember you from your stay there in England? Did the two of you have much contact at that time?

WOODRUFF: Well, we didn't have much contact, no, but we had known each other slightly. I had never been stationed with him before in a place where we might have had some close contact.

BURG: Were there any contacts between you and Eisenhower from 1945 to 1952, up to the Presidency? See one another or correspond?

WOODRUFF: Yes, he came out to Japan. I had the 1st Corps which had the ground forces of the south half of Japan, exclusive of

the British. He came out there in May, '46, Ike did and spent a good part of the day in my general area. Two things I remember very well about it. I insisted always that my jeep be completely unbuttoned, the top down. Well, people had been driving Ike around in the official sedan. I drove my own jeep; so I put him in the front seat of the jeep and drove him around. He just absolutely loved it; it was the best thing that ever happened. And the correspondents were popeyed because in the past they had tried to get an interview or photograph of him through the car door. And another thing, I remember when General Eichelberger who was the 8th Army commander and I were taking him to the airfield down near Osaka. Eichelberger asked Eisenhower if he had considered a political future, at that time he was being coddled you know. And Ike made the statement, "Well, you know I would like to do that if I were the nominee of both political parties."

BURG: Was he kidding, General?

WOODRUFF: Oh, he was kidding, of course.

BURG: He was just laughing about it.



WOODRUFF: But at that time apparently he hadn't made up his mind. I carried that political thing a little bit further. As I left Japan in February, '48, I dropped in to see General MacArthur, who I'd seen I think twice during my two years and a half in Japan. I had a few things I thought he might be interested in in my experience with the Japanese and so on. But I didn't get a chance to say a word, more than "Thank you," "Goodbye" or something because the General had just heard that Ike had made a statement that he thought that no professional military man should seek high political office. He was furious. He stomped up and down his office smoking his corncob pipe like mad and so on. And after a while he said, "Well, Woodruff, glad you came by, give Alice"--(Mrs. Woodruff had known him when he was a lieutenant), "Shake hands with everybody." Tickled me like everything.



BURG: He had spent most of that time reading out Eisenhower in your presence?

WOODRUFF: Well, not by name, don't misunderstand me, but the attitude that simply because the man had been in the military for a long time made him ineligible for a political job.

BURG: And that was the theme that he addressed himself to while you were?

WOODRUFF: He sure as hell did.

BURG: Did that strike you funny at the time?

WOODRUFF: Well, I was a little bit furious because I thought I had something to tell him. But all I could do was receive and not say a thing.

BURG: Well, that must have been very, very amusing for you. Now did you see Eisenhower later on? Let me ask you while we're on that subject, did he allude back to southern England and your replacement at that time?

WOODRUFF: No.



BURG: Didn't come out?

WOODRUFF: I don't remember. You see if it did, I'm quite sure it would have made an impression on me, but I'm quite sure also that he didn't mention it.

BURG: He seemed glad to see you, didn't he?

WOODRUFF: Oh, yes, I think so.

BURG: Did you talk about the old days at all or do you remember the themes of your conversation?

WOODRUFF: Well, no, but I'm sure we didn't talk about anything about England. Then the only other time I saw Ike I think was when he was President of Columbia [University]. I was, part of that time, stationed at Governor's Island there in New York Harbor. And they had us to a football game; I think it was the Columbia-Army football game or something of the sort there. But I saw very little of him there. He was then involved in the academic game of course.

BURG: Were there any other contacts with you during the Presidency or after the Presidency?

WOODRUFF: Only at the class reunions.



BURG: And the conversation then was just sort of, "Hello," "How are you?" "How's things been going?"

WOODRUFF: That's right, that's right.

BURG: Well, that's a remarkable story that you've been able to tell me and with many, many useful pieces of information.



WOODRUFF: Well, it's just the things that I happen to remember. By the way you mentioned a man that kept a diary for quite a long time, I started a diary in 1920--the most innocuous entries that I've encountered. For instance I expect ninety nine percent of it is something like "So-and-so beat me three sets of tennis today" or something like that you see.

BURG: Do you still have that diary or diaries that you kept?

WOODRUFF: I started out with one of these five year diaries. You had four lines a day. Well, the days when I had something to write about I used the four lines. After I retired, I now have a book a year, and I write a lot of dribble in that whole page for every day, and it doesn't amount to a damn.



BURG: Now that's the sort of thing that we would be delighted to have if you should wish to deposit it with us.

WOODRUFF: Well, now that has come up before, and I think it was about the Eisenhower Library at Gettysburg or something of the sort.