

William M. Hoge

William M. Hoge's career reflects the diversity of duties that an Engineer officer may be called upon to perform—soldier, engineer, combat leader, and senior commander. It is a career that spans the spectrum of responsibilities from military and training education, to all facets of peacetime civil and military engineering, to combat in three wars.

Upon graduating from the US Military Academy in June 1916, Hoge served briefly on the Mexican border in Texas with the 1st Engineers before being assigned to duty with the newly organized 7th Engineer Regiment, first in the United States and then in France during the First World War. There he earned the Distinguished Service Cross and Silver Star for extraordinary heroism under fire during a bridging operation in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive (October-November 1918). Before leaving Europe in July 1919, he directed drilling, salvage, and construction work in France and Luxembourg.

Once back in the United States, Hoge spent much of the next 20 years in military education and training and in Civil Works assignments. After two years as assistant professor of military science and tactics at Virginia Military Institute he was assigned to Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1922 to 1923 for advanced work in civil engineering. A brief assignment to the Rock Island Engineer District in Illinois was followed by a two-year tour of duty at the Engineer School, Fort Humphreys (now Fort Belvoir), Virginia, where he was an instructor in tactics. Following a year (August 1927-June 1928) at the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Hoge went to the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, as the Engineer instructor and commander of the Engineer troops. It was there that Hoge served with and came to know many of the men who would lead the US Army during World War II, soldiers such as George C. Marshall, Omar N. Bradley, J. Lawton Collins, Matthew B. Ridgway, and James Van Fleet. His years at Fort Benning ended the educational phase of Hoge's Army career.

With his assignment to the Mississippi River Commission (MRC) in Vicksburg, Mississippi, from July 1931 to September 1932, Hoge entered fully into the Civil Works phase of his career. He was then transferred to the Memphis Engineer District where he served as an assistant district engineer under Brehon B. Somervell until September 1933. Hoge was then District Engineer at Memphis until May 1935. From June 1935 to November 1937, he commanded the 14th Engineers, Philippine Division, at Fort William McKinley. During the latter part of this tour, he also served as the Division Engineer, Philippine Division, and as the Chief Engineer of the Philippine Army under General

Douglas MacArthur, who was then the military advisor to the Philippine Commonwealth. Hoge was promoted to lieutenant colonel before returning to the United States in January 1938 as the District Engineer at Omaha, Nebraska. While District Engineer at Omaha, he was responsible for the early planning and development of the large dams on the Missouri River.

In December 1940, with Europe already embroiled in a second world war and the United States beginning to mobilize its military forces, Hoge was assigned to command the Engineer Replacement Training Center at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. At Fort Belvoir, with the assistance of Paul W. Thompson, another Engineer officer, he built the first obstacle course for military and physical fitness training. After he saw the course, General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army, ordered similar courses for all Army training camps.

In February 1942, Hoge was pulled out of Fort Belvoir and given a seemingly impossible task—to build a military highway from Dawson Creek, British Columbia, to Big Delta, Alaska, through largely unmapped and at places impassable territory. Promoted to brigadier general in March 1942, he initially had complete control over the construction from Dawson Creek to Fairbanks—a distance of more than 1,500 miles. The distances involved and lack of reliable communications resulted in a division of responsibility for the highway in May 1942. Hoge was left with the Northern, or Whitehorse, Sector that ran across one of the most inaccessible and rugged areas of North America from Watson Lake, British Columbia, to Big Delta, Alaska. Although he was reassigned in September 1942, before the Alaska Highway was actually opened to truck traffic, Hoge was largely responsible for driving the pioneer road to completion that year.

In October 1942, Hoge was assigned to the Armored Force at Fort Knox, Kentucky. After a brief orientation, he moved to Fort Riley, Kansas, in November 1942 to take command of Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, under his old friend from World War I, Major General John W. Leonard. He remained with the 9th until September 1943 when he was again reassigned, this time to command the 4th Engineer Special Brigade, an amphibious Engineer unit. A month later he received orders to proceed to England as commander of the 5th Engineer Special Brigade, which was to participate in the Allied invasion of the Continent, Operation OVERLORD.

In March 1944, Hoge was given command of the Provisional Engineer Special Brigade Group, which included the 5th Engineer Special Brigade, now under Colonel Paul W. Thompson, and the 6th Engineer Special Brigade. His mission was to prepare for and conduct landing operations with the assault divisions on D-day on OMAHA Beach and then develop the beachhead to support the combat troops once they were ashore. On 6 June 1944, Hoge's command successfully carried out its duties and played a significant part in securing the

initial foothold at OMAHA Beach. He remained in charge of the beachhead until July 1944 when he assumed command of the 16th Port, a Communications Zone unit responsible for supporting the VIII Corps in the Brittany Peninsula and then for clearing the captured French Channel ports, including Le Havre, and establishing supply lines for the American armies fighting in France.

Hoge cared little for this work and soon requested transfer to a combat unit. He contacted John Leonard, whose 9th Armored Division had recently landed in France, and Leonard offered him his old command. After a brief reassignment to the 12th US Army Group in October, Hoge rejoined the 9th Armored in November 1944, just in time to gain fame for his stubborn defense of St. Vith during the Battle of the Bulge. In the critical and savage fighting at St. Vith, Hoge combined with the 7th Armored Division's Combat Command B, under Colonel Bruce C. Clarke, another Engineer officer, to hold off the vastly superior Germans from 16 to 24 December. The defensive fighting at St. Vith bought the valuable days that the Americans and British required to reestablish their defenses and contain Adolf Hitler's Ardennes Offensive. For his actions at St. Vith, Hoge received a Distinguished Service Medal (DSM).

On 7 March 1945, the leading elements of Combat Command B seized the Ludendorff Railroad Bridge over the Rhine River at Remagen. Quickly exploiting his good fortune in capturing the only major bridge over the Rhine that was still standing, Hoge pushed over the river and established a firm bridgehead on the eastern shore. For this he received an Oak Leaf Cluster to his DSM and later in March was given command of the 4th Armored Division in George S. Patton's Third Army. On 2 May 1945, he was promoted to the rank of major general.

After the war and a special assignment with the Operations Division, War Department General Staff (July-December 1945), Hoge was assigned for several weeks as the Division Engineer, New England Engineer Division (December 1945-January 1946), before being given command of The Engineer Center at Fort Belvoir (January 1946-June 1948). He was appointed Commanding General, US Troops in Trieste (TRUST) in June 1948. He remained in Trieste until General Matthew B. Ridgway, commander of Eighth US Army in Korea, summoned him to command IX Corps in March 1951. In June 1951 he was promoted to lieutenant general, and his distinguished service in the Korean fighting earned him another Oak Leaf Cluster for his DSM.

From February 1952 to March 1953, Hoge commanded the Fourth Army at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. In March 1953, General J. Lawton Collins, Army Chief of Staff, asked Hoge to take command of the Seventh Army in Germany, the major American ground component in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In September 1953, he received his fourth star upon becoming

Commander-in-Chief US Army, Europe (USAREUR). He retired on 31 January 1955.

In February 1957, Hoge became Chairman of the Board of Interlake Iron Corporation of Cleveland, Ohio, finally retiring from that job in 1965. He loved outdoor sports, especially hunting, fishing, and riding. Also he enjoyed his dogs and seldom failed to take them on daily walks until the last few years of his life. In 1975 his failing health led him to move in with his son, Colonel George F. Hoge, US Army (Retired), in Easton, Kansas. Beside curtailing his physical activity and independence, Hoge's deteriorating health affected his eyesight and deprived him of his ability to read. Throughout his life, he was an avid reader, especially of military history and biography. General Hoge died at Munson Army Hospital, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, on 29 October 1979 at the age of 85.

General William M. Hoge was remarkable in that he accomplished so much so well during his career. Certainly his extensive achievements in peace and war-in military engineering, combat, military education and training, Civil Works, and senior command-are goals not just for Engineers but for all Army officers to strive toward in their military careers.

His close friend and classmate from the Class of 1916, Major General Thomas D. Finley, put it best:

In my opinion, Bill Hoge's service in War and Peace has been unequalled by anyone in the Army in its diversity, the challenges it posed and the value to the Service and the Country. He has known so many people and influenced so many lives, both civilian and military . . . I can say it, and not just as an old and dear friend, that he was the best man I have ever known, and the best soldier.

Career Summary

Background and Early Childhood
West Point

August 1916- May 1917

Platoon Leader, Company B, 1st Engineer Regiment, Fort Brown, Texas, and
Washington Barracks, District of Columbia

May 1917- April 1918

Company Commander, Company C, 7th Engineer Regiment, Fort
Leavenworth, Kansas

April 1918- July 1919

Company and Battalion Commander, 7th Engineer Regiment, American
Expeditionary Force (AEF), France and Luxembourg

September 1919- October 1919

Assistant to the District Engineer, Kansas City, Missouri

November 1919- June 1921

Assistant Professor of Military Science and Tactics, Virginia Military Institute,
Lexington, Virginia

June 1921- June 1922

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts

June 1922- January 1924

Assistant to the District Engineer, Rock Island, Illinois

January 1924- July 1927

Instructor in Tactics, The Engineer School, Fort Humphreys, Virginia

August 1927- June 1928

Student, Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

September 1928- July 1931

Engineer Instructor and Commander of Engineer Troops, The Infantry School,
Fort Benning, Georgia

July 1931- September 1932

Assistant to the President, Mississippi River Commission, Vicksburg,
Mississippi

September 1932- September 1933
Assistant District Engineer, Memphis, Tennessee

September 1933- May 1935
District Engineer, Memphis, Tennessee

July 1935- November 1937
Commanding Officer, 14th Engineer Regiment, and Division Engineer,
Philippine Division, Department of the Philippines; Chief Engineer, Philippine
Army

January 1938- November 1940
District Engineer, Omaha, Nebraska

December 1940- February 1942
Commanding Officer, Engineer Replacement Training Center, Fort Belvoir,
Virginia

February 1942- May 1942
Commanding General in Charge of Construction, Canadian Alaskan Military
Highway, Whitehorse, Yukon Territory

May 1942- September 1942
Commanding General, Northern (Whitehorse) Sector, Canadian Alaskan
Military Highway

September 1942- November 1942
Headquarters, The Armored Force, and 8th Armored Division, Fort Knox,
Kentucky

November 1942- September 1943
Commanding General, Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, Fort
Riley, Kansas

September 1943- October 1943
Commanding General, 4th Engineer Special Brigade, Fort Gordon Johnston,
Florida

October 1943- March 1944
Commanding General, 5th Engineer Special Brigade, Fort Gordon Johnston,
Florida, and European Theater of Operations US Army (ETOUSA)

March 1944- July 1944
Commanding General, Provisional Engineer Special Brigade Group, First US
Army Group (Provisional), ETOUSA

July 1944- October 1944
Commanding General, 16th Port Command, Communications Zone, ETOUSA

November 1944- March 1945
Commanding General, Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, ETOUSA
Battle of the Bulge, Crossing the Rhine

March 1945- July 1945
Commanding General, 4th Armored Division, ETOUSA

July 1945- December 1945
Chief, Special Board, Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations Division, War
Department General Staff, Washington, DC, and Pacific Theater

December 1945- January 1946
Division Engineer, New England Engineer Division, Boston, Massachusetts

January 1946- June 1948
Deputy Commanding General and Commanding General, The Engineer
Center, Fort Belvoir, Virginia

March 1946- June 1946
Senior Member, Army-Navy Alaska Board, War Department, Washington,
DC, and Alaska

June 1948- March 1951
Commanding General, US Troops in Trieste (TRUST), Trieste, Italy

March 1951- February 1952
Commanding General, IX Corps, Eighth US Army, Korea

February 1952- March 1953
Commanding General, Fourth US Army, Fort Sam Houston, Texas

April 1953- September 1953
Commanding General, Seventh US Army, Germany

September 1953- January 1955
Commander-in-Chief, US Army Europe (USAREUR), Germany

January 1955
Retired from US Army

February 1957-1965
Chairman of the Board, Interlake Iron Corporation, Cleveland, Ohio

Promotion History

Grade	Temporary	Permanent
Second Lieutenant		13 June 1916
First Lieutenant		12 August 1916
Captain		15 May 1917
Major (CE)	1 August 1918	
Captain (CE)		20 January 1920
Major		23 April 1921
Captain*		4 November 1922*
Major		19 September 1926
Lieutenant Colonel		1 July 1937
Colonel	26 June 1941	1 September 1944
Brigadier General	27 March 1942	
Major General	2 May 1945	24 June 1948 (DOR 13 September 1944)
Lieutenant General	1 June 1951	
General	23 October 1953	

* Discharged as major and appointed captain 4 November 1922 in accordance with acts of 30 June and 14 September 1922.

Personal Data

Date and Place of Birth:

13 January 1894, Boonville, Missouri

Parents:

William McGuffey Hoge and Annette Fiery

Marriage:

Nettie (Fredendall) Hoge, 1 May 1917

Two Sons:

Colonel George F., US Army (Retired)

Lieutenant Colonel William M., Jr., US Army (Retired)

Six Grandchildren

Ten Great Grandchildren

Education

US Military Academy, West Point, New York, 1912-1916

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts (BSCE
1922)

Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas (1927 - 1928)

Citations and Decorations

Decorations

Distinguished Service Cross (World War I)
Distinguished Service Medal with 2 oak leaf clusters (World War II and Korea)
Silver Star (World War I) with one oak leaf cluster (World War II)
Legion of Merit
Bronze Star Medal
Air Medal
Commendation Ribbon with Metal Pendant
Purple Heart

Service Medals

Mexican Border Service Medal
World War I Victory Medal with three battle clusters
Army of Occupation of Germany Medal (World War I)
American Defense Service Medal
American Campaign Medal
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal
European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with Bronze Arrowhead and one Silver Service Star for participation in the Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, and Central European campaigns
World War II Victory Medal
Army of Occupation Medal with Germany Clasp
National Defense Service Medal
Korean Service Medal with four bronze service stars for participation in
First UN Counteroffensive
CCF Spring Offensive
UN Summer-Fall Offensive
Second Korean Winter Campaigns

Unit Awards

Distinguished Unit Emblem with one oak leaf cluster

Foreign Decorations

Belgian: Order of the Crown, Degree of Commander

Brazilian: Order of Military Merit of Brazil, Grade of Commander

British: Most Honorable Order of the Bath, Degree of Honorary
Companion

Distinguished Service Order

French: Legion of Honor, Degree of Chevalier Croix de Guerre with
Palm

Czechoslovakian: War Cross of 1939

Soviet: Order of the Fatherland, First Class

Italian: Military Order of Italy

Korean: Taekuk Distinguished Military Service Medal with Silver Star

Foreign Service Medals

United Nations Service Medal

Professional Societies

Society of American Military Engineers