

switched during my brigade command, so then I didn't get the opportunity to go two back to back.

Of course my recommendation had been not to let people do that, so the irony being that the system had worked for a number of years, and about the time when I might have the good fortune of doing both, the system changed. So, I got the opportunity to go to Heidelberg for a year to work as a staff engineer, and then come back to the Pentagon in the Office of the Assistant Chief of Engineers for a year instead.

In the end, if anything made the difference between my selection for brigadier later on, which happened just after I arrived in the Deputy ACE's [Assistant Chief of Engineers] job, it was probably the fact that I did not go off to a second command job but went instead to Heidelberg. There I worked on some very tough issues that were visible Armywide. So, I would suppose that when the board looked at my file, they saw that I had had those tough jobs I had mentioned, not only command, but also in Heidelberg doing a tough job. Well, the irony might be that I didn't get the opportunity to do two in a row, but from the standpoint of potential for selection, it probably worked out better for me.

Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army

Q: Your next assignment in '74-'75 was assistant to the Director of the Army Staff, Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army. What did that position involve, and how did you get to that position?

A: Well, that was an interesting period. The bottom line of all this was that I was completing two years as an assignment officer, and you get a certain burnout feeling when you're doing the same things over again. I had changed, or helped change, the system, and that was exciting, but I wasn't going to go off and be a district engineer in the next assignment like Chuck Fiala and all my predecessors had done. So, I felt it was time to seek a change in responsibility here in town while I was here. It was time for something new.

You know, when you're in the Army, you maybe get addicted to change. That is, you enjoy the new challenge every couple of years or so in a new position. Maybe you don't always enjoy the physical move, but you get a sense when you've sort of maxed out in your professional development in a particular area, your juices aren't as charged as they were before, and you really need to seek something different. So, that's about where I was as we ended that time. Nobody else had ever been there more than a couple of years—that was about the right tour—and I knew there was a board meeting and I was in the primary zone for colonel and thought I would be selected.

So, if I stayed in MILPERCEN another year I'd be doing the same kind of things over again, so I ought to seek to do something in the Office of the Chief of Engineers or in the Pentagon.

I had a West Point classmate, Dave Palmer (who has just retired as superintendent of West Point), who was in the Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army, working in an office called the Office of the Deputy Director of the Army Staff for Coordination, Analysis and Reports. Another classmate, Mike Conrad, was also working there. They had some changes coming up in that office, and so Mike and Dave asked me to come over and interview with some people.

So, I did, and was then selected to join that office. They were changing leadership; the fellow coming in was supposed to be Colonel Bob Sennewald, who did not come in but was picked for brigadier that same week. Later, of course, he ended up as a four-star commander of Forces Command.

This office had been part of the old Secretary of the General Staff's office, but under the Army reorganization it was now the Director of the Army Staff. The director had two or three subelements under him, one of which was the Staff Action Control Office, in which they had the so-called "Seven Dwarfs." These were the people who were actually running the actions. When papers come in to the Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army from throughout the Army Staff, they would come to that office. Those action officers would make a quick review. If it was all right, everybody had signed off on it, they sent it on to the Director of the Army Staff and on to the Vice Chief or the Chief of Staff for action. They processed and controlled staff actions.

Then there was our office—CAR (Coordination, Analysis, and Reports). There were four elements to it. One was the Chief of Staff's speech writer, one person sometimes augmented to two. Second were the Chief of Staff's legislative assistants. They would put together all the issue papers and sit behind him when he'd go over to testify on the Hill. When he wanted to talk about a subject he was questioned on, they'd pull out the right paper and set it before him. They were the keepers of the testimony books in that respect. Third were the people who put out the *Weekly Summary* from the Office of the Chief of Staff to all Army general officers every two weeks. Finally, there was the special action team. I was part of the team.

I can't remember how many of us there were; I guess there were five plus Colonel Doug Smith, who was the chief of the special action team. Colonel Vic Hugo was the Deputy Director of the Army Staff for Coordination, Analysis, and Reports.

Our job was to assist the command group—the Chief of Staff, the Vice Chief of Staff, and the Director of the Army Staff—in any way in which we were needed. I really mean that in the full sense of it. You could say we were almost "gofers" in this respect because our jobs weren't specifically diagramed. If there was a need, we were there to go and try to answer that need.

We had areas that we were assigned to monitor. The Army Staff was divided up into functional areas, and we were each given several offices and areas to monitor. My recollection is that I had the Office of the Chief of Engineers, rather naturally, and the DCSLOG, the Inspector General, and some others—six or eight.

Papers were sent to us from the Staff Action Control Office to keep us apprised of what was happening on the Army Staff. A paper might come over that they would say was ready to go to the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, and if they thought it was an important issue they'd send us a copy. Or if a paper came in which they were bothered by or felt something was amiss—they only had about three minutes to review any particular paper because they had so many of them—and a more thorough review was needed, it would be given to us. Then we would go down and try to talk with the staff officers involved from the sending office to make sure it was straight, so we could recommend basically to the Chief of Staff that he ought to sign it or not sign it, or perhaps he ought to call a meeting.

I would suppose that process was followed back on the command selection for district engineers issue. The DCSPER sent a paper up saying the Chief of Engineers wants this thing to happen, and I nonconcur. It was reviewed; it was sent to the special action team; and the officer who was monitoring DCSPER or the Chief of Engineers actions looked at it and determined there were a lot of issues and disagreement and recommended the Chief of Staff of the Army call a meeting, bring them both in for a discussion, and make a decision.

Within the Office of the Chief of Staff we would write what we called a “BOM,” which stood for blue office memorandum—it had a blue border on it. That would go on top of the Chief of Engineers' action paper or the DCSLOG's action paper or the others. On it we would write our analysis and recommendation. Say, for example, the Staff Action Control Office sent a paper over and thought it needed more review, and when we got into it, we took issue with it or we felt it really wasn't complete. We would prepare a BOM to the Director of the Army Staff or the Vice Chief or the Chief of Staff giving our views. “So and so sent up a paper; he recommends this. However, in looking it over, there are several questions that arise. We don't think it really answers this or that. Recommend the paper be returned with the following questions to be asked....” Then we would sign our name as the action officer making that recommendation. Then my boss, the chief of the special action team, and the Director of the Army Staff for Coordination, Analysis and Reports would initial it and send it on up.

Thus, the Chief of Staff would have the paper and he had his own inner staff comments on top of it. When the paper came back out, the Chief of Staff would have written his decision. Then the blue office memorandum would be pulled off—it would not go back to the DCSLOG identifying this lieutenant colonel had taken issue with the lieutenant general's recommendation. The Chief of Staff's decision would be written on the DCSLOG's paper. So, what we really provided was a way for the Chief of Staff to have his own thoughts, and also somebody to do a second independent analysis of an issue.

The Chief of Staff didn't have the time to do it all; somebody else could chase down the issues. A paper might go in to him that everybody thought was clean, and he might say, “I'd like CAR to look into the following....” So, we might then have to go look into an issue that he initiated.

It was a very interesting assignment in that I might track certain things, but there was always something going on where we were probing into various kinds of things to try to “do right for

the Army,” and allow the Chief of Staff or Vice Chief of Staff to make the right kind of decision.

Several interesting things came up. I remember one issue that came out followed General Abrams saying, “We have got too many reports of survey and we never find anybody responsible. Why can’t we simplify the procedure where we just hold somebody responsible if he loses something, and don’t have to go through all this paperwork?”

He sent the Army’s Inspector General around the Army to check. The Inspector General came back and said, “We just got all kinds of stuff missing and we’ve got all kinds of paperwork out there, and it takes forever to get it processed before we get the missing items replaced.”

So, the DCSLOG was asked to take a look at the issue. The answer that came back up said basically that the fix was too tough because the Judge Advocate General [JAG] says we’ve got to do all this stuff. The JAG was saying we’ve got to follow the law, and all that.

So, it came down to us in the special action team. I was the one who got the action, but there were two or three of us who sat around and jawboned the issue so we would know what was going on in the field. What it came down to was that we really ought to have a simple process that, if a soldier loses something, that’s simple negligence. You shouldn’t have to go through all the paperwork, but the soldier ought to pay for it through a simplified procedure.

So, I took the paper back to the DCSLOG and the JAG and nobody was happy with that. I mean, it was sort of, “This is the way we do things and we should continue doing it the same old way.” By dialoguing things and by forcing the issue under the signature of the Director of the Army Staff, people were required to relook the issue. Questions were asked back to the DCSLOG and the JAG, “Why can’t we do this?”

By going back and forth to the lieutenant general, Director of the Army Staff, we drove a process whereby people relooked the issue, challenged the unthinkable, and came up with new ideas, and we overcame the obstacles to change the system. So, that process was operated by CAR, and specifically the special action team, so that was a value to the Chief of Staff of the Army. We would get questions coming down from the Joint Chiefs: “What about...; I heard about this...” and we would develop answers. Books and articles would come out. We had a lot of them at that time right after Vietnam and My Lai, different kinds of things where we would do an analysis and send it up in an executive summary so that the Chief of Staff or the Vice Chief of Staff could get a feeling for what it was and have some sense of what’s in the book or paper and could send other questions out and get more into it if they wanted to.

One project I did involved the Center of Military History. After General Abrams died in office from cancer, General [Frederick C.] Weyand was selected to replace him. General Weyand wanted to bring in former Chiefs of Staff and talk to them about the Army of the day and the issues we faced.

The project was to take current issues and link them back to issues his predecessors had faced. I guess it was like, “I’m now going through this drill much like you had to go through a similar drill,” or “I’m doing these things, which are different from what you did.” The issues addressed the size of the Army, where research and development funds were focused, the roles and missions between the Air Force and the Army, and a whole bunch of different things.

About two weeks before the session, the Chief of Staff said, “I’d really like to know about the issues they faced during their days.” So, that was sort of a typical task, and it came down the way to CAR, and I was the available special action team member unassigned with a mission at the moment. So, I was given the task of, “How about analyzing these eight Chiefs of Staff that are going to be here and their periods?” The periods went all the way back to the end of World War II. “List out what were their issues and what they thought.”

The problem was that I only had about four days to do it. So, an advance call went over to the Center of Military History that said, “We’ve got to do all this, and this Lieutenant Colonel Kem will come over and lead the effort.”

So, I went over there and sat around and jawboned it for a while, and basically picked different periods and different chiefs, and several historians pulled in the stuff. The Chief of Military History assigned who was to do what, and they wrote it up and sent it in to me. I was the collator, bringer together in a format, editor, and that kind of thing.

Once we had it, then I boiled it down into a two- or three-page executive summary of all of those things, and then developed a matrix with the names of the Chiefs of Staff across the top and the issues down the side—an issue like Army versus Air Force roles; you know, we had to decide who gets the Caribou, who gets the helicopter and so forth. Another was the size of the Army, how many divisions did each have and that sort of thing.

Then we filled in the matrix with words; it was a word picture, not just numbers, to say “here it is,” and it was a triple foldout. So, a week after that, each was given a copy of this matrix representing the analysis of the Army and its important issues in each period.

It was a tremendous surge of effort—evenings and weekend. It was a pretty fair product, but not so rigorous. That was a typical requirement. When the Chief of Staff or Vice Chief of Staff of the Army had a need to do something—we would provide that need.

It could also be assisting speech writers, as speech writing requirements were heavy at the time, or analyzing a book and what was said, or analyzing various items like the one I mentioned. We also worked up trip books for the Chief of Staff and the Vice Chief of Staff when they went out to visit places—pulling issue papers together.

So, it was a year of doing that, really being an extension of the thinking and actions for the Office of the Chief of Staff.

Q: Did you enjoy that?

A: I did.

Q: It seems like it offers the possibility for a lot of surge jobs, a lot of things.

A: There were. Somebody was surging every week. That meant we also helped each other out. That was the job of the chief of the special action team, to put together a team effort.

When it came to be legislative time, we all helped in reviewing the papers that the legislative guy would keep in his big black briefcase. We would all, in our particular areas, review those papers and work on issue completeness. Our capability was to call straight to an action officer; I could call the Office of the DCSLOG and say, “What’s all this really about? What do you really think? What did you mean to say here?” So, we could fill in the blanks a lot of times without having to send some paper back down needing to come back up, or we could augment the paper. So, we helped facilitate how things ran.

I always thought if I was ever in a senior position *any place*, I’d really want to have a special action team. In fact, in a budget crunch, FTE [full time equivalent] crunch times, they’re hard to justify.

One of the things I did that year was write a paper justifying why CAR and the special action team should be kept. It carried the day and CAR was kept. Since then it’s gone away.

Q: So, is it that nobody is doing that kind of thing, or did they just give it to someone else?

A: It happens some other way now.

Q: Some other way they do it. About how many people were involved in that office, roughly?

A: I remember that the special action team had five. There was probably one fulltime speech writer, one fulltime legislative person, two people doing the weekly summary—those were all uniformed. Then there were probably four secretaries plus the chief of the special action team and the director.

Q: That’s still a pretty small group.

A: The speech writer was totally dedicated to speeches and never got involved in the rest of the stuff, other than to participate in discussions about issues, because he had more direct interaction with the Chief of Staff than many of us. He would hear things as he was writing the speeches and he would share them.

For me, that position, being my first in the Pentagon, gave me, from the start, a broad perspective of the Army Staff and the secretariat. So, it was really a perspective broadener on the inner workings and functions of Army leadership and on the thinking of the day. We were trying to write things that would become Chief of Staff policy statements. He would say, “I really think we ought to have a policy on so and so. I’d like to move in this direction.”

Often CAR was the group that actually wrote the sentence or two of the policy, put in the words, put in the direction, and then send it in to him and he would fine-tune it, change it, throw it out, start over, or refine it where appropriate.

Q: Well, it would give you a sense of inner workings and the paper flow at that critical juncture.

A: I was happy to work there rather than in with the Seven Dwarfs, who were in the paper flow tracking actions—get it in, wait for a signature, get it back, send it on back with the right kind of decision, and get it all filed and recorded appropriately. So, they were really in the flow; we were just off the flow—

Q: Watching it.

A: Available to provide some capability to address substance.

Chief of Public Affairs, Office of the Chief of Engineers

Q: Do you know the month when you went to your new assignment in Public Affairs in 1975? Your next assignment was Chief of Public Affairs in the headquarters of the U.S. Corps of Engineers.

Can you say a little bit about how that particular assignment became your next one?

A: Yes. First of all, in November 1974, after I'd been in CAR, I came out on the colonels list. I was in a lieutenant colonel position, so there was a push to have me move to another colonel's position. It was a matter of finding another position. While working with the engineer colonels assignment officer, a position as Chief of Public Affairs for the Corps of Engineers came up.

I don't know if the name was recommended to him or he came up with my name, but General Gribble, through the system, asked for me to be his Chief of Public Affairs. Of course I'd known him earlier when I was at the North Central Division and in work when I was in the Colonels Division and he had been Chief.

He knew I was on the colonels list. The Corps had a real public image problem at that time and was coming to a head with environmentalists thinking we weren't in the forefront of the environmental movement as we'd been trying to tell people we really were. Fred Clarke had put out his policy to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of, I think, 1969.

We in the Corps were doing pretty well in changing our paradigm internally, but this was a time when the environmentalists were really teeing off on the Corps, and a lot of high-visibility things were happening. Articles in the papers and the magazines were harpooning the Corps. The Chief's Environmental Advisory Group had been established.