

ORAL REMINISCENCES
OF
FOR GENERAL JOHN H. CHILES

Independence, Missouri

July 27, 1977

(Interviewer: D. Clayton James)

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DCJ: This is D. Clayton James, interviewing Major General John H. Chiles in the conference room in the Harry S. Truman Library at Independence, Missouri. General Chiles' permanent address is the Beaufort address, isn't? Not Liberty?

JHC: Liberty.

DCJ: You want the Liberty address listed as permanent? Okay. That's 128 North Leonard Street, Liberty, Missouri. This is July 27, 1977. We also have a recording being made for the Truman Library's oral history collection.

General Chiles, I normally start out by having colleagues of General MacArthur just hit high points of their military careers, but we won't need to do that in your case except to pick up when you graduated from West Point.

JHC: 1936.

DCJ: '36. In World War II you were in Europe, right?

JHC: Yes.

DCJ: But you do have a prior association with MacArthur?

JHC: Yes.

DCJ: Let's start with that then.

JHC: I first knew General MacArthur when I became military aide to the High Commissioner of the Philippines in 1939. General MacArthur,

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of course, was Field Marshal of the Philippine Army during that period, living in the penthouse on top of the Manila Hotel. Since my wife and I accompanied the High Commissioner and his wife to most of their functions, I, just by inadvertence, became probably the only junior American officer that General MacArthur had any acquaintance with. When he became Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific [USAFPE], he would take no one on his staff from the Philippine Department headquarters. He had acted this way toward General Grunert and the Philippine Department since they had not granted him everything he asked for the Philippine Army over the past few years. So he would accept

nobody on his staff who had served in Philippine Department headquarters. As a result, he got a bunch of officers, most of whom were Army War College graduates--lieutenant colonels. I came back to the Philippine Scouts. Francis B. Sayre, Woodrow Wilson's son--in--law, was already over there. Sayre had two marriageable age daughters. He didn't know much about the military; anyway, he didn't want a married aide. He wanted a bachelor aide, I suppose, to squire his two daughters. In any event, a classmate of mine named Priestly became his aide, and I was not banished but sent back to the Philippine Scouts. Priestly later was killed, by the way, in the Death March. Anyway, one of General MacArthur's first steps was to unfreeze the officers in the Philippines. We had been all frozen and downhearted. Am I digressing too much?

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DCJ: No.

JHC: We thought we'd be sitting there all during the war like World War I people did in the Philippines.

DCJ: If I may interrupt, by unfreezing you mean on promotion?

JHC: No. All the families were sent back before General MacArthur took command. I guess it was War Department orders, but I don't remember. All of our families were sent back in the spring of 1941, and all of the officers, American officers, were frozen with no assignments; they were stuck. When MacArthur came in, I'm sure as a moral gesture, he decided that fifty officers a month would return to the United States in the order in which they'd arrived. And I was in the third group of fifty that came back in September, as it turned out.

DCJ: Yes, he took over, I believe, in late July, '41.

JHC: July. Before I was ordered back to the States under his policy, I got word from my former battalion commander. I was a captain at this time, but Congress hadn't passed its bill authorizing our salaries. Al Dewey was my original commander. My battalion commander would become MacArthur's G-4--Lewis C. Beebe. And Brougher was my regimental commanding officer; I lived with him. I was sort of a low man in the regimental quarters.

DCJ: You mean William Edward Brougher?

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JHC: Yes.

DCJ: Are you aware of my book on Brougher? I wrote a book for University of Georgia Press, South to Bataan, North to Mukden.

JHC: I thought he wrote it. I've got a copy of it.

DCJ: Yes, well, I edited his diary.

JHC: It's a good book.

DCJ: Probably, since you knew him, he gave you the Long Dark Road. He gave, I believe, a copy to everyone.

JHC: Sure. But he died at Fort Benning. Mrs. Brougher and two of their daughters were in our quarters at Benning, in Georgia

DCJ: She's a sweet person.

JHC: Anyway, Colonel Beebe came back with the news General MacArthur had selected me to be his aide. Well, our first child was about to be born. I was going back to the 2nd Division because Beebe had told somebody in the War Department that was the best place for me. If I'm digressing too much, let me know.

DCJ: No, go ahead.

JHC: Anyway, I did not say "No, thank you" to General MacArthur but, of course, I was dying to go home. And so I sent the word back that it wasn't my choice, under his policy I was ordered back, and yet it's his decision to make me his aide, so which was I

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to do? I thought the answer would come back the next day. I didn't sleep that night. Well, about three nights went by. Finally word came that I was to follow my orders to return and that he wasn't going to change his policy for himself just after he had enunciated it. So I got back. The thing that always has intrigued me was that when General MacArthur left Bataan, he left one of his aides with General Wainwright and took the other one with him. Which one would I have been? So, like the story of the tiger and the lady, I'll never know. But that was my first acquaintance with General MacArthur.

DCJ: And he didn't take Beebe with him either.

JHC: That's right. Beebe became Wainwright's chief of staff.

DCJ: Before we leave that early Manila period, did you happen to meet Ike before he went home?

JHC: Yes.

DCJ: He went home about December '39.

JHC: If you're interested, I've another human interest story. I think this might intrigue you. We went to the Philippines on our honeymoon in 1938. We had our first wedding anniversary on March 12, 1939. We went to the brand new Marco Polo Hotel. They had a roof restaurant, as I guess you'd call it now, with music. We are up there and had a bottle of champagne and flank steaks, which was the most ritzy thing you could buy in those

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days. After dinner we were dancing, when here came Lieutenant Colonel Eisenhower, who'd been MacArthur's G-3 for five years, I guess. I don't know where Lieutenant Colonel MacArthur had been, but he was a little bit under the weather. He was in a real rumpled linen suit. He came in alone.

DCJ: You mean Eisenhower?

JHC: What did I say?

DCJ: You said Colonel MacArthur.

JHC: Colonel Eisenhower, sure. Anyway, I stood up and invited him to join us. He said no, he didn't want to interrupt a wedding anniversary. We told him that we'd already had our champagne and steak. So he sat down and was feeling sorry for himself. He must have spent forty-five minutes explaining how he'd come over there. He'd worked for MacArthur before in Washington.

DCJ: Yes, when he was Chief of Staff.

JHC: When he was Chief of Staff, that march on Washington took place.

DCJ: Yes, the Bonus Army.

JHC: Yes. So when MacArthur went to the Philippines, he asked for Eisenhower, who came over as the deputy chief. At the table Eisenhower told us that the war clouds were hovering over Europe, and America was beginning to see the handwriting on the wall. Anyway, the gist of it was that he, Eisenhower, said he had been

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number one in his class at Leavenworth, he'd been a lieutenant colonel with two or three years' service, and had a real promising career. But he had stayed too long with MacArthur, and all the good jobs were being dealt to his contemporaries in the States, and it was too late to do anything about it. He had lost out in the competition for the good jobs. On the way home that night, my wife and I said, "Well, isn't that too bad. This handsome, articulate, dynamic lieutenant colonel has lost out." Next time I saw him was on Omaha Beach. He had four stars, and shortly after that he had five. Then when he got elected President, I couldn't stand it any more so I wrote him a letter. I reminded him how this poor unfortunate guy now was President-elect of the United States. I never got an answer from him because he was off even then at Augusta playing golf. Senator Vandenberg's nephew was sort of his liaison; I don't know what his actual job was. Anyway, he answered me that the President-elect was off to Augusta, but, as soon as he got back, my letter would be brought to his attention and he would answer it. Of course, he never did. But, yes, I did know him, Colonel Eisenhower.

DCJ: Now, General Chiles, from this period 1939 to '41 in the Philippines, you came back to the States, and then you had a tour of duty in the European Theater in '44-'45, is that right?

JHC: I joined the 2nd Infantry Division at Fort Sam Houston in November 1941, just before Pearl Harbor, and stayed with it until I went to the Armed Forces Staff College in the summer

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of 1947. That was my first tour of duty with the 2nd, the first of four with the 2nd Division.

DCJ: As far as actual combat operations, though, you were involved in what campaigns?

JHC: In Europe?

DCJ: Yes.

JHC: There were five, beginning with Omaha Beach and ending up in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia.

DCJ: The race across North France and into Germany?

JHC: Yea, we were in the battles at Brest, the Bulge, and then the Siegfried Line.

DCJ: Was that First Army?

JHC: Part of the time. Originally it was First Army, but we were in Simpson's Ninth Army.

DCJ: Okay, I want to move on into this period I'm most directly concerned with and that's post-World War II. Now, after the war, what tours of duty?

JHC: After the war I stayed in the 2nd Division until '47, as I mentioned. I went to the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk; from there I went to Tokyo. Well, to back up, I was commanding a regiment at the end of World War II, and General Almond took command of the division at Camp Smith, Texas.

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DCJ: When Almond came in, did you hear anything of his reputation with that black 92nd Division in North Italy? Did you get any scuttlebutt on that?

JHC: Yes, he had a reputation of being a very rough commander.

DCJ: I believe that's the right division, isn't it? It was the 92nd?

JHC: 92nd, yes. And I might interject right here, that whatever you might think of General Almond, and he's a very controversial man, he had an attribute that you hear a lot of people reflect on: he never failed to take a military objective. And that's why we were being paid, all the other things aside. He also had a faculty that I've only known two or three others to have, of choosing people with, in general, great potential for his staff. For instance, in my G-3 section of X Corps, at least six in my section alone, G-3 section, rose to two to four stars. So Almond picked 'em.

DCJ: That's interesting.

JRC: Yes. He was rough. In fact, I was commanding the 23rd Infantry when he joined us. And we thought we were heroes. We admitted it. And he came in and started slashing around, which we didn't appreciate. Maybe it was more our fault than it was his. We probably were pretty cocky. Anyway, at staff and commanders' meetings each week for three weeks in a row he announced that when he drove into the 23rd Infantry gate in his own private

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car from Austin to Camp Swift that the 23rd Infantry MP on the gate failed to salute him. So I ended with a lieutenant colonel with a walkie-talkie and a code to whistle when he saw General Almond show up. Well, the fourth time I was getting a little bit bugged, edgy about this-- to be denounced in public every week. So a fourth time he said, "I drove into the 23rd Infantry gate and I failed to get a salute." He said, "Chiles, what are we going to do about this?" Well, I shouldn't have made an angry response, but I said, "Sir, why don't you try driving into the 38th Infantry gate." Boy, there was a deathly silence. All of a sudden he grabbed his sides and almost fell on the floor laughing, and he said, "Approved, Chiles."

DCJ: What rank were you at that time?

JRC: I was temporary colonel.

DCJ: When did you go to permanent colonel?

JHC: I don't remember.

DCJ: What about BG?

JRC: I made BC in 1960, I guess it was.

DCJ: And major general?

JRC: Major general was '64, I guess.

DCJ: And you retired in '70, didn't you? Okay, when you were Secretary of the General Staff in Tokyo, was that FEC and SCAP?

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JHC: Both. And along with that also UN.

DCJ: Yes, in 1950. But FEC and SCAP in 1948-50, right?

JHC: I went over there in '48.

DCJ: About when in '48 did you go?

JHC: I arrived in March '48 and became SGS in '49. General Almond had fed me into this; it was his doing that made me the SGS.

DCJ: When you came, though, Paul Mueller was still Chief of Staff, wasn't he?

JHC: Yes.

DCJ: And Almond took over some time in '49, didn't he?

JHC: That's right.

DCJ: Succeeded him?

JHC: Almond was the Deputy Chief for the FEC staff.

DCJ: Pat Fox was there, too, wasn't he?

JHC: Yes. When Almond became Chief of Staff, Doyle Hickey came in to be the FEC Deputy. So I was there during all the preliminaries to the Korean War. The attack in June 1950 was an absolutely complete surprise.

DCJ: From Secretary of the General Staff, SCAP and FEC, 1948-50, you moved on to what position?

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JHC: Well, General Almond selected his staff largely out of GHQ itself. I was made the G-3 of X Corps.

DCJ: And X Corps' first specific reason for existing was Chromite, or Inchon, wasn't it?

JHC: The Inchon landings.

DCJ: Or Chromite Operation; that was the code name. Now, you stayed as G-3 under Almond from about July or August '50?

JHG: I guess it was July.

DCJ: Until?

JHC: Until Valentine's Day of '51 when I relieved the wounded Paul Freeman, commander of the 23rd Infantry.

DCJ: Okay, now that was 2nd Division again. Wasn't the 2nd your old division?

JHC: Yes. It was my second tour with them. The regimental combat team was surrounded at Chippyong-ni by the Chinese, and that was my reintroduction. There are various spellings to all these Korean names.

DCJ: Right. Well, there are Japanese, Chinese, and Korean spellings.

JHC: We had Japanese maps—a lot of times we couldn't tell.

DCJ: Well, like Chosin Reservoir--I believe Chosin is the Japanese spelling. Now, you stayed as the 23rd's commander till when?

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JHC: The fourth of July.

DCJ: Okay, from February till July of '51. And then what? Returned to the States?

JHC: I became a student at the Army War College, and who should show up but Ned Almond as the Commandant at the Army War College. So my service with him was inadvertent, although he rewarded me richly, I must say.

DCJ: Now, just hit high points very quickly from '51 till retirement, and then I want to go back to this war period.

JHC: All right. In '51 I went to the Army War College. Then General Almond again kept me on the faculty; I had the operations course at the Army War College for three years. Then I went to MAG Spain for three years with Bert Barnes, who was the Assistant Commandant. Then I came back to the Pentagon, in operations; I had the Middle East Division on the Joint Staff. Then I was selected to start a new mission in Argentina.

DCJ: Now this is '61? I've got you wounded then in the West Point register.

JHC: No, wounded is an error, and I had them correct that. I was not wounded in Argentina.

DCJ: I wondered how that happened.

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JHC: I wrote to them and asked them where in the hell they got that idea. They never answered, but they changed it.

DCJ: That sounds like Clovis Byers' wound in Papua. I don't know if you ever heard about that.

JHC: That was just a misprint. Anyway, I was sent down there as a colonel and got promoted before my family showed up a couple of months later. I would have bucked and kicked otherwise. Clyde Eddleman was the one that ended up picking me to go down there in this new mission, which was quite a feather in my cap. He knew damn well I was on the BG's list, but he didn't want to go through all the rigmarole of the State Department dragging their feet and getting somebody cleared with the Argentine Government, so secretly he decided to send me down for one year. It worked out all right.

President Kennedy had just come in. I got promoted. They said, "Look at this handsome young Catholic American President who thinks so much of Argentina that he sends a guy that gets promoted." When I left, the next guy was only a colonel, so the Argentine Ambassador camped on Lemnitzer's doorstep till he sent them another BG. After Argentina I came back and was Assistant Division Commander under Ralph Haynes in the 1st Armored Division. We almost got to Cuba.

DCJ: Where were you?

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JHC: At Hood, but when the Russian missiles were discovered, they fired us to Camp Stewart in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

DCJ: That was during the missile crisis period, wasn't it?

JHC: Yea, and after eighteen months there, to my disgust, I was sent down as attaché to Mexico. I only stayed there a year. I got promoted out of there and came back to command the 2nd Division, then a year at Benning. H. K. Johnson became Chief of Staff.

H. K. was S-3 under Brougher and Beebe when I was the S-2. Then, as Chief of Staff, he gave me the first division he had open, which I appreciated.

DCJ: Did you all call him "H. K." and not "Harold"?

JHC: "Johnny" is all I ever called him. Then I commanded the 2nd Division for two years in Korea.

DCJ: That was '64-'66 when you went to Korea again?

JHC: Right. Then I came back as Deputy CG in Fifth Army, till I retired.

DCJ: Which was where?

JHC: Fort Shaven. My first station as a commissioned officer was in Fort Shaven and my last one, which not many people can do.

DCJ: Now, let's go back to the '48-'51 period. Let me ask you about a few people, and what's your opinion of them. I want personality sketches, as I told you before we went on tape.

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JHC: I might say, of course, I was kind of young but had the opportunity, as not very many junior officers had, of seeing all these people. I don't think my mind was as set in concrete as a lot of these people.

DCJ: Now, during that '48 to '51 period, you were what rank?

JHC: Lieutenant colonel. I'd been busted back like everybody else.

DCJ: You were a lieutenant colonel during that whole period? When you came back to the Army War College, were you still one?

JHC: Oh, no. I got a battlefield promotion commanding the 23rd in the spring of '51.

DCJ: Okay, so you came back as a colonel, but you went out to Tokyo as a lieutenant colonel in '48.

JHC: That's correct.

DCJ: I just wanted to get that straight.

JHC: Well, I had been colonel, but then was busted back.

DCJ: All right. Let me ask you about a few people before we turn to MacArthur. How would you describe Ned Almond in personality? Now, remember I know him, but the man I know today is not the man you knew thirty years ago. So we're talking in essence about different people.

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JHC: That's right. General Almond himself often said, "If I have not seen somebody in five years, I will not know him."

DCJ: Yes, I'm talking about a much older man, and you're talking about a man in his prime. So how would you, in a few words, General Chiles, describe him?

JHC: Okay. Very proud, very intolerant, but very fundamental along with it. One time while we were eating, the Chinese hit us in a big May offensive. I thought he was going to hit me because against my orders one of my battalion commanders got his kitchen trucks burned up.

DCJ: You're talking about May '51?

JHC: Yes. I tell you, he was so mad I thought he was going to swing at me. I got wounded that night in the leg. My leg was swollen up; there were fragments in it. The next morning Almond cried when he saw I was hurt. But he'd send me into certain death if he thought it necessary. He was highly intelligent, opinionated, and completely devoted to General MacArthur. General MacArthur didn't have anybody that was more of a disciple than Ned Almond.

DCJ: Paul Mueller was Chief of Staff before Almond. What kind of guy was he?

JHC: A cold fish.

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DCI: I've heard that elsewhere.

JHC: Sort of beady, blue eyes. If he had a sense of humor, it was not revealed much to us lieutenant colonels. We called ourselves the "Certified U.S. Mules." I don't know whether you ever heard this or not. "Dog-packs" weren't strong in those days; we could only deliver mail in "dog-pack" by certified U.S. mules. Well, the G's were not allowed to brief the Chief of Staff or MacArthur. They had to use the Secretary to brief the Chief of Staff for them. So we were "Certified U.S. Mules."

DCI: Okay, what about Pat Fox?

JHC: Very kind, thoughtful, scholarly, perhaps a little bit introverted, a gentleman.

DCI: Pinky Wright?

JHC: I couldn't prove this, I don't think Pinky was as smart as he ought to have been at his job. He was generally an affable, likable guy, but short-tempered.

DCJ: As a corps C-3, did you actually deal with the FEC G-3, which he was?

JHC: No. I came back twice to brief General Hickey and the staff on the Wonsan operation--first, the move around from Inchon around to Wonsan and then the Chosin operation. But, no, I had really no dealings with Wright.

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DCJ: Okay, let's turn to another man--Willoughby. Did you ever see him?

JHC: "Sir Charles," yes.

DCJ: Okay, how would you describe him?

JHC: Insufferably hardy. I'm sure, a highly intelligent guy, but moody. He manufactured intelligence he wanted General MacArthur to hear. That's a pretty damning statement, and I don't think I could prove it.

DCJ: Yes, I've got it elsewhere on tape--I mean, similar statements.

JHC: He chewed something that made him smell like formaldehyde.

DCJ: I've never heard that.

JHC: Want me to tell you a little story about him?

DCJ: Yes.

JHC: When General MacArthur went down to see Chiang Kai-shek, I felt very privileged to have been the little guy with all these big ones in these big meetings.

DCJ: We're talking about the summer of '50?

JHC: That's correct, yes.

DCJ: The controversial visit?

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JHC: When MacArthur went down, he didn't even ask the State Department or tell the War Department he was going. He took his whole staff. I went along as a junior guy. While we were waiting for General MacArthur to show up out at the airport, Willoughby sideled up to me and reached out and put something in my hand. It was a roll of fifty ten-dollar bills, as I soon discovered. If I had any time at all, I'd have had some of these changed into one-dollar bills. But General MacArthur drove up just then, and General Willoughby said to me, "This is a confidential fund. Make no record of this money. Just spend it where it will do the most good." So we got to Taipei. The Generalissimo and General MacArthur went up to his private mansion, or whatever it was, up on Grass Mountain. We went on to the top of Grass Mountain, and the others followed us. They were all major generals except me. They didn't have their aides, except me under General Almond. Anyway, after all the bags were taken up, the bell captain and his employees all lined up there. Looking back on it, I guess I could have taken a couple of those tens and told them to break them up; that's all I had. I gave each one of them a ten-dollar bill, and the next morning when we came down, here were all these sedans lined up to whisk all the generals away. They all climbed in, two or three to a sedan, but here was a sedan for me alone with a Chinese lieutenant general, who opened the door. He knew where the

money was.

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DCJ: How did you happen to go on that Formosa trip? I wasn't aware of that.

JHC: General Almond asked me to. He was Chief of Staff, and well, I think General Almond always liked me and trusted me. Many of these things were just fascinating experiences. Probably you're going to get around to the telecons when the Korean war started?

DCJ: Yes, I want to go back to it. But another person I want to ask about is Doyle Hickey. How would you describe him?

JHC: One of the kindest. I felt about General Hickey sort of like I felt, at a greater distance, about Omar Bradley. I always felt that General Hickey needed my help, and I'll be darned if I wasn't going to try to help him. He was kindly, really sort of selfless--a very down-to-earth thinker. If anybody didn't like Doyle Hickey, there was something wrong with him.

DCJ: Okay, how about O. P. Smith?

JHC: Well, watching him and General Almond square off at each other, I must say I was a little more inclined to be for General Almond, although I'm sure there are two sides to the coin.

DCJ: Yes, you ought to hear the Smith tape I've got.

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JHC: O. P. Smith resented being under an Army commander of any sort, and it didn't take but about the second meeting for them to hate each other. Smith came as close to getting insubordinate as he could he.

DCJ: Really?

JHC: Almond also was overbearing. It was a very unfortunate personality conflict. I didn't think O. P. Smith ever really went forward, but Ned Almond was right down in the front-line battalions all the time. Almond was usually riding in O. P. Smith's helicopter because he didn't have one at that time. I was not overly impressed with O. P. Smith. I was more impressed with his C—3, Al Bowser.

DCJ: Yes, I interviewed Bowser.

JHC: He was a very capable guy. Was it Ray Murray who had the 1st Marine Regiment over there?

DCJ: I don't remember. Several Marines told me tales about Almond's luxurious trailer. Was that in the Wonsan-Hungnam area?

JHC: General Almond lived first class.

DCJ: Yes, and still does I might add.

JHC: Yes.

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DCJ : I think his Anniston home is as pretty as any I've been in, of all these persons I've interviewed.

Now, did you ever have any opportunity to run into Courtney Whitney? If so, how would you describe him?

JHC: Well, I guess you probably already know that General MacArthur was the “Emperor.” He did not do scarcely any traveling at all. He did go down when the Philippines became a republic. I went with him on that first trip to Korea, but by and large he didn’t travel.

DCJ: The first trip to Korea--you’re talking about his visit to the Han River in late June of ‘50?

JHC: Yes, after the war started. But he kept himself very remote. The only people who saw him, or could see him--well, there were exceptions once in a while--were the Chief of Staff, Courtney Whitney, Willoughby, and his two aides, Sid Huff and Larry Bunker. They were the only people who could get in to see him, and who did see him weeks upon end. Courtney Whitney was a crony from the Philippines. As I recall, he went out in the Spanish-American War, stayed on, and made a fortune, I believe in Baguio Consolidated Mines. And MacArthur was paid partly as the Field Marshal of the Philippine Army in Baguio Consolidated Mines stock. But I’m unconvinced of it. I don’t know whether Whitney had any military rank when the war started or not, but he ended up with the Government Section as a major general.

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DCJ: He had been in the Army Air Service in the twenties and then had quit. He had become a lawyer in Manila and made quite a bit of money. Then in World War II, in June of ‘43, he came out to SWPA headquarters; he was a colonel at that time and was in charge of the guerrilla liaison activities with the Philippines. Then, as you say, he moved up to SCAP Chief of Government Section.

JHC: I would say from my standpoint, since we had met in Manila that he knew who I was. He ignored almost everybody pretty much. He was grave-faced, obviously with not any particular military background, but he had MacArthur’s complete confidence, as far as I could tell. They would sit for hours in MacArthur’s office; I have no idea what they were talking about.

DCJ: As you and I both know, Almond and Whitney had something going there in the way of friction.

JHC: Almond thought Whitney was poison in MacArthur’s mind.

DCJ: Well, that was what I was getting ready to lead up to. What do you think was the root of that?

JHC: I think General Almond, as Chief of Staff, felt that nobody should go around him to see MacArthur.

DCJ: Sutherland, the World War II Chief of Staff, had that same trouble with Whitney.

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JHC: Yes.

DCJ: Of the Chiefs of Staff that MacArthur had during the period you were there, Almond was the closest. I’ve heard very few men suggest that Paul Mueller was close to MacArthur. Would you back that up also?

JHC: As far as I can tell, yes. Mueller was a really colorless guy. Not an engaging personality. Inclined to be abrupt. He’d been a division commander, He was pretty much of a cold fish.

DCJ: Can you remember any interesting episodes relating directly to MacArthur when you were

Secretary of the General Staff in Tokyo, '48-50?

JHC: I think this one is terrific. General MacArthur, day after day, week after week, would arrive with his MP convoy with the radios on at both ends and the big crowds restrained by MPs as he walked up.

DCJ: You mean the Embassy-Dai Ichi itinerary?

JHC: Yes, Embassy-Dai Ichi--right down that one road. MacArthur, when he either got in or out of his car, usually had his hands behind his back, with that John Barrymore profile--a lot of times with his corn cob pipe in his mouth. He never looked up. He had one of his aides, either Huff or Bunker, with him. He became one of the big events in Tokyo, like the changing of the guards at Buckingham Palace. Inside the

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Dai Ichi building everybody would not flatten against the wall, but they got well out of his way. This one time an elevator opened for General MacArthur to get in, and, as far as I know, that's the only time he ever even looked up or recognized anybody was there. This one morning as he got in the elevator, he turned around and said, "Anybody want a ride?" Of course, everybody just sort of stood back, but one brash young major who had just arrived said "Yes, sir." He came forward and got in, and the elevator door closed. Larry Bunker reported this story. And this young major said, "Three, please." The operator whipped them up right to the fifth floor, opposite MacArthur's office. As General MacArthur got out, he turned around and said, "You got more of a ride than you bargained for, didn't you, young man?" That was a rare occasion.

DCJ: Are there any other anecdotes that you might remember from that period when you were Secretary of the General Staff in Tokyo, '48-50?

JHC: Well, shortly after I became the SGS instead of the Assistant SGS, I was in General Almond's office. To back up, between General MacArthur's office and the Chief of Staff's office was a conference room. That's where, for instance, they had the briefing for the Inchon landing, but it was very seldom used by MacArthur. Once or twice a day he would open his door and come across to the Chief of Staff's office. Well, you could always hear the click of his door, and we all knew that

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when you heard the click, you grabbed whatever you had and beat it out of the room. Well, I hadn't actually personally seen General MacArthur since the Philippine days. We'd actually not met or shook hands. He had no social life, as you know, though he did give luncheons on occasions. But, anyway, I was leaning over General Almond explaining something, and I felt a hand on my shoulder and looked up, and it was General MacArthur. For some reason or other, there'd been no click. General Almond leaped to his feet and said "Sir, you know Colonel Chiles?" MacArthur patted me on the shoulder and said, "Of course, I do. I see him every day." What he'd been seeing was my fat fanny disappearing down around the corner. "See him everyday."

DCJ: Okay, now as General Staff Secretary, what were your functions in Tokyo?

JHC: I guess the shortest description would be executive to the Chief of Staff. I kept all of the records, or the files, of the Chief of Staff, and most of General MacArthur's files, too. He kept a few of his own, but, by and large, we were the message center. Of course, I had an assistant because we really had one job then. It's too bad you didn't interview John Hightower. He was my assistant.

DCJ: What rank? And where is he?

JHC: He retired a major general.

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DCJ: Where is he?

JHC: Royal Pines, in Beaufort.

DCJ: Isn't Hightower a neighbor of Mildren. He's right around the drive, isn't he?

JHC: Yes. You didn't see him?

DCJ: No. He was gone.

JHC: Well, he was my assistant during all this time. And a great guy. He and Mueller and I were also in World War II together. where was I?

DCJ: We were talking about your functions as Secretary.

JHC: I had three lieutenant colonels each on the FEC and SCAP sides who did the briefing of their respective deputies. Then I briefed the Chief of Staff. No one ever briefed MacArthur except the Chief of Staff. I don't know what Whitney and Willoughby did when they got in there.

DCJ: Did you notice anything distinctive about MacArthur's headquarters--the organizational or administrative set-up? Was there anything unique about it?

JHC: Sure. It was supposed to be a joint staff, but he ignored the JCS, as you know. There were none of them who were brave enough to challenge him. They kept--oh, once a month--ordering him to

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make a joint staff, but it was an Army staff. He finally, as a concession to the JCS, organized a thing called JSPOG, Joint Strategic Plans and Operations Group.

DCJ: That's what Pinky Wright headed, wasn't it?

JHC: Well, it was under the G-3, who was Pinky Wright. But it was an entity. They had three old Army colonels, or one Navy captain and two old Air Force and army colonels. They had a Navy guard that guarded whatever they were doing back there, which didn't amount to a whole heck of a lot. But that was the "Joint Staff." And they might just as well not have had it. Of course, there were many unique things about MacArthur headquarters, but the GHQ operated on normal duty hours, as you'd expect any military or business headquarters.

DCJ: Except MacArthur himself.

JHC: MacArthur would come to work about 10:30, stay till about 2:00 or 2:30, go home and have lunch, take a nap, play with his little boy, come back about 5:30 or 6:00, and stay until he and Whitney got through talking. We never knew when he was going to go home.

DCJ: When he did entertain, that was usually at a luncheon, wasn't it?

JHC: At a luncheon.

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DCJ: Not in the evening?

JHC: That's right, he'd never go out. Who was that great big bruiser who was Secretary of Defense?

DCJ: Louis Johnson?

JHC: Louis Johnson. He made a mistake. He was going to force MacArthur to come out to dinner with him. Well, he didn't succeed anymore than anybody else did. MacArthur just patted him on the back and said, "Now, son, you know I'm getting to be old, and I don't do things." But the result was that the G's themselves, who had to be on tap when MacArthur or the Chief of Staff wanted them, had ungodly hours. That's the reason John Hightower and I really had the same job. To MacArthur, Christmas was just another Tuesday, or Sunday. That's how I happened to be the first guy to hear about the Korean War. This excited colonel got on the phone and said, "The North Koreans are invading" I thought he had a bad hangover.

DCJ: The time it started was around 3:00 or 4:00A.M., wasn't it?

JHC: It might have been, but it hit Tokyo more like 8:30 or 9:00 in the morning.

DCJ: Can you tell me a little about the telecons?

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JHC: That's one of the most electrifying periods of my life or anybody else's. General MacArthur, in turn, asked for sea blockade and air blockade and then introduction of Army forces in Korea. He was very irritated about what would happen. I don't know how they do it these days, but in those days you'd go into this so-called telecon room, and the telecon would be like an old-fashioned movie screen. It would come out on print--a statement or question that the JCS wanted to ask. Then General MacArthur (or somebody would do it for him) would write down, or dictate, the answer. It'd go back in the machine and appear on the screen in Washington. Every time MacArthur would ask a question, they'd say, "Wait, and then we'll reconvene in three hours." Which meant that they had to go to the Secretary of Defense, who went to the White House. In each case MacArthur put into effect what he asked for before he got permission, to my personal knowledge, including the introduction of that first battalion into Korea. MacArthur (I don't know why he was putting on an act, for there was no need to put on an act for us) had his hands behind him, bent over, pipe sticking out, pacing up and down. After the second one of these "wait-three-hours" business, he said, "This is an outrage." He said, "When I was Chief of Staff, I could get Herbert Hoover off the can to talk to me. But here not just the Chief of Staff of the Army delays, but the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of Defense. They've

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got so much lead in there that. it's just inexcusable." So, as I say, he went ahead and did what he asked for, and each time it was approved. An amazing experience!

DCJ: Can you remember anything of that trip to the Han River in late June of '50?

JHC: We landed at Suwon. I want to say that anybody that says that Douglas MacArthur was a coward is crazy. He may have thought he was Jesus Christ and invulnerable to anything--that could well be--but he was not scared of anything. I watched him come ashore at Inchon, walk around a burning North Korean tank, and he could well have been in the range of small-arms fire. So he was no coward. Anyway, he decided to go to Suwon to meet Ambassador Muccio and Syngman Rhee.

They'd fled down south somewhere; I don't know where they were. Anyway, they rendezvoused at Suwon, because MacArthur was not going to land way back in the hind end of it; he wanted to get up there where it was. He invited General Stratemeyer, who was head of the Air Force, but Stratemeyer didn't want to go at all. So he alerted every fighter in Japan, I guess, to accompany General MacArthur's plane, and General MacArthur took most of his General Staff with him. So we really were protected going in and landing at Suwon. While we were gone, thought, Tony Story took off in the old "Bataan" and went

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somewhere while we were in these meetings. The second aircraft, full of secretaries and other minions, came in unescorted and was blown up on the ground by the North Koreans while we were there.

DCJ: I think that's why Tony Story took the "Bataan" and left. They got word that there was an air raid coming.

JHC: Did you talk to Tony, by the way?

DCJ: Yes, I talked to him long ago.

JHC: You got a lot of BS out of him, I'll bet.

DCJ: Well, he's a crude character, in my book.

JHC: He was a good pilot, I guess.

DCJ: Yes.

JHC: Where were we?

DCJ: The visit to the Han River.

JHC: We went into this meeting in the schoolhouse across the bombed-out bridge from the Suwon strip, and talked to Syngman Rhee and got briefed by the Korean Army Chief of Staff, who had been an ordinance major in the Japanese Army. That was his qualification for being Chief of Staff to the Korean Army! And then MacArthur, in the meeting, gave his idea of the way to fight this war. They were being just pushed back as fast

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as they could go. His idea was for everybody to disperse and go into guerrilla warfare. Then MacArthur said he wanted to ride up to the Han River, and he did. I don't know whether he was strafed; I was in a jeep with some scared-to-death military assistance guy, an American, and the road we were on was strafed. We got in a ditch. I don't know who they thought we were; they were American aircraft, they weren't enemy. So the thing was, well, chaotic. But MacArthur went right up to the Han River and stood on the edge and watched Seoul burning. I don't believe any of the North Koreans had gotten across the river. And then he came back, and that's when Maggie Higgins got aboard. I don't know why in the hell he ever put that babe on there. Do you know much about Maggie?

DCJ: I know Michaelis; I'll put it that way.

JHC: He's a classmate of mine. Anyway, Maggie got aboard the plane and sat down cross-legged with her typewriter and talked to MacArthur all the way back to Tokyo. I don't know what her scoop was; I've forgotten.

MacArthur very, very seldom lost his cool. But right after the Korean War started, Look magazine came out with what he considered a very scurrilous article about our air control parties being inadequate. It was a scathing article. If you haven't read it, you ought to look up Look magazine. It burned MacArthur up. So he wrote an equally scathing denunciation of Look magazine and their reporting. Well,

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the next week Look magazine published a photostat of his letter on their cover and sold twice as many Look magazines as they'd sold the week before. Then the next week they put a rebuttal in on what he had written and sold four times as many. Well, of course, the last thing MacArthur wanted to do was to increase Look magazine circulation, but when you loose your cool with the press, you'd better watch out.

DCJ: Do you remember any particular details about MacArthur's visit at Inchon?

JHC: Sure do. Bill Quinn was the G-2, and I was G-3. Bill later became a supporter of Goldwater a little before he should have. He was on active duty, and it didn't work out very well. Of course, if Goldwater had won, he'd have been in great shape, but he didn't. Anyway, Bill was the G-2 and a very capable one. We knew, of course, Inchon was devastated, and we got word General MacArthur was going to come ashore and wanted to have a briefing for him. Well, hell, we didn't have anything to give General MacArthur a briefing in, so we found an old building; it may have been a Quonset hut. Bill Quinn and I decided we had to do something desperate to get a decent briefing room. So Bill went out and I don't know who he bribed, but I have a feeling that the red, or maroon, draperies and sofas and rugs and what-not he got must have come from a house of ill repute. I'm not sure. But they were real things for Inchon--something else, I'll tell you. And we used these

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velour curtains (sort of black-out curtains) and Bill Quinn had all this overstuffed furniture and rugs. Up until ten minutes before the briefing Bill and I were down on our stomachs with grease pencils putting the situation on the map.

Then I might add the story of what happened after General MacArthur told General Almond when he wanted to restore Syngman Rhee to office in the capital. And this, as you may have heard, was one of the bitterest things that the Marines have against General Almond, because he gave them an order to take Seoul by a particular time. I'm not going to get into that; I didn't do it.

DCJ: That's when he sent the 7th Division in from the south and southeast side of Seoul, while the Marines were coming in from the west and northwest side?

JHC: That's exactly right.

DCJ: He got impatient, didn't he? Well, it was really pressure from Tokyo on Almond, wasn't it'?

JHC: Yes, it was. Whether he could have protested, I don't know, but General Almond would not protest to General MacArthur. And we lost some soldiers there. That happens, in my opinion, any time you try to take an objective by a deadline regardless of the opposition.

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DCJ: It reminds me a little of Diller and his communiqué. Do you remember that premature victory communiqué on Seoul?

JHC: No.

DCJ: About September 25th.

JHC: You mean Pick Diller?

DCJ: Well, that was World War II, but Diller used to have to do this stuff--send out communiqué's announcing a victory before it was won. On September 25th Almond or MacArthur, I forget which, released a communiqué announcing that Seoul had been taken when actually there were still two heavy days of fighting left.

JHC: That's exactly right. I don't want to get into that.

DCJ: Well, can you think of any other visits that MacArthur may have made to X Corps headquarters? For example, when you moved over to the east side of the peninsula, up to Wonsan and above?

JHC: He did not come. He did come south.

DCJ: When you evacuated Hungnam, you went back to the tip of the peninsula for a while, didn't you?

JHC: No. That Hungnam evacuation was a remarkable thing. It's about as unique as anything, I guess, the military's ever done. As a matter of fact, my wife and I went over as guests

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of the Koreans a year ago last November on this "revisit Korea" program. When I was commander of the division over there, the Hungnam evacuee organization was throughout South Korea; many of those people are very prominent in any field you could think of and they are powerful people. Well, they learned I'd been the G-3 and actually wrote the evacuation order. We had excess shipping. They would have been murdered if we hadn't taken them out. With the excess shipping we took out upwards of 100,000 North Koreans on our ships. They now have it as 200,000. When I went back this time a year ago November, I was met by a delegation of two or three hundred people with big signs, and I was on Seoul television and every radio broadcast, in every newspaper. I was a hero; it was all symbolic. I was the guy they knew, and the more I said, "Look, all I did was to be G-3," they said, "Look, how modest this guy is." Finally I just stopped doing it. It was a remarkable operation.

DCJ: Yes, it was. It was a logistical feat. General Chiles, when you came back south with the evacuation, did you ever see MacArthur at Taegu, or don't you remember him coming over again?

JHC: No. Of course, you haven't touched on it, but there's also a much deeper animosity between General Walker and General Almond than there ever was between O. P. Smith and General Almond.

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DCJ: That's right. Part of that was the wives, by the way. You are aware of that?

JHC: Oh, sure.

DCJ :The wives disliked each other more than the men did, I think.

JHC: Yes, and it was sort of like the pot calling the kettle black. Walker was very suspicious of Almond. He thought that Almond was putting words in MacArthur's mouth and getting MacArthur to make decisions, because he was close to MacArthur and Walker wasn't.

DCJ: And he didn't yield his position either. Doyle Hickey was simply Acting Chief of Staff.

JHC: Yes. Of course, you can't blame General Almond for that. General MacArthur wanted to keep his fingers on things, and that's the reason he sent the X Corps around the east.

DCJ: To Wonsan?

JHC: Yes. He kept Almond as Chief of Staff as well as CC, X Corps. Almond didn't do that; he was told to do that. But that, of course, didn't help. And, to be perfectly honest, X Corps got some things that Eighth Army couldn't. We had the inside track. Some three-colored mimeograph machines, for example, that Bill Quinn got. Almond documented his X Corps as well as anybody ever documented anything, in my opinion. I'm sure you've seen a lot of that.

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DCJ: There's a lot of ill feeling by Walker's people, as you are perfectly aware, but I noticed this especially with regard to Wonsan. They felt that they were logistically starved when they had to outload the 1st Marines at the very time that Eighth Army was moving past Seoul and headed toward Pyongyang. Do you think there is some validity to that criticism?

JHC: I suppose. Back in the Pusan perimeter, when GHQ ordered Murray's Marines out to join the 1st Division, Walker said, "I'm no longer responsible for the Pusan perimeter. You have taken away my insurance." And General MacArthur just thought that was funny.

DCJ: How did Ridgeway and Almond get along?

JHC: There wasn't the antagonism between Ridgeway and Almond that there was between J. Layton Collins and Almond.

DCJ: I'm not aware of Collins and Almond's relations.

JHC: J. Lawton Collins, the Chief of Staff.

DCJ: Yes, I know who you're talking about.

JHC: They hated each other's guts since they were young men at Fort Benning. At the final conference before the Inchon landing, MacArthur overruled the JGS, and Admiral Doyle, who had the amphibious shipping, and Struble, who was the

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Navy commander. MacArthur just overruled them, said that he had a lot more experience than the Navy or any of them had all through the Southwest Pacific. He said he had nothing but admiration for what the U.S. Navy could do, and that the date would be the 15th of September. Well, nobody raised any objections--none of them. General Collins, the Chief of Staff of the Army, said, "Well, the argument is all over. Now you're going to have to set about." General MacArthur had said he wanted an Army corps for the Inchon landing. General Collins said, "We'd better get busy picking the corps commander." General MacArthur said, "No. He's already been picked." Collins said, "Well, who's that?" He said, "Well, Ned Almond is." Collins got half out of his seat and said, "What" And, well, that in itself would have been enough to make Almond mad at Collins. Now they had no regard

whatever for each other. In fact, General Collins came over to Hamhung shortly before the evacuation. General Collins arrived with Swede Larson, who was his aide. I don't know whether you've met Swede or not.

DCJ: No.

JHC: He was left in command of Sixth Army. Obviously, I don't know what Collins thought Almond was doing wrong, but he had Larson out spying around trying to find if certain allegations were true about this and that. Bill McCaffrey was the Deputy Chief

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of Staff, and he reported this to General Almond. General Almond came close to kicking Larson in the fanny. There was no love lost at all.

DCJ: About mid-January of 1951, after Ridgeway had taken over and Eighth Army was about to turn around again, Collins and Hoyt Vandenberg came over. MacArthur had been sending frantic messages back to Washington, giving the picture to the Joint Chiefs that the situation was so critical that an evacuation of the peninsula might be impending. And then Lawton Collins came over, and some authorities believe that his visit to the front in January of '51 and his subsequent report back to the Joint Chiefs were the point of no return, or the turning point, as far as MacArthur's career was concerned. His report disproved what MacArthur had been saying--that the situation wasn't critical, that Ridgeway had things in control. The question I was leading to was this: As far as Collin's visits over there, that would be the most important one for me. Do you remember if at that time he saw Almond or you?

JHC: At Hamhung you mean?

DCJ: When he came over in January of '51. Walker was dead and Ridgeway had just taken over; he had been in command maybe two weeks. I don't remember where you were at that time.

JHC: I was still G-3 of X Corps.

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DCJ: I know it, but I was trying to think where X Corps' headquarters was then.

JHC: We were at Chungju. Both I and X Corps headquarters were in Chungju, up in central Korea.

DCJ: Up in the middle of the peninsula?

JHC: That's right.

DCJ: Did Collins come over there? Do you remember?

JHC: I don't know. I don't remember that visit.

DCJ: What about Frank Pace's visit in April of '51? The celebrated time when he was supposed to have gotten the message to deliver to MacArthur about his relief. Did Pace come by your area?

JHC: No.

DCJ: Did you see Pace when he was over?

JHC: I'm sure you've heard the story, and I have no first-hand knowledge because I wasn't there, but it's my understanding that Harry Truman cannot be blamed for what seemed like a very peremptory relief of MacArthur. They did everything to try to get Frank Pace to deliver it, but they couldn't find him.

DCJ: Yes. He was at the front

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JHC: in fact, you know the affection I have for President Truman and also for General MacArthur. I think General MacArthur, even though he had an Achilles heel like everybody else, was probably the greatest American I ever personally knew.

DCJ: MacArthur?

JHC: Yes.

DCJ: How would you compare MacArthur and Truman as leaders?

JHC: How would you compare Omar Bradley and Georgie Patton? If either one of them had tried to act like the other one, they would have flopped.

DCJ: Yes. That's right. We've got two about as distant as they come. Truman's stature is definitely rising every year, and from the historians' point of view he's in the category of the near great now among the Presidents. I think if they had to grade him, they'd grade him as an "A-" President now, which is higher than he would have gotten in earlier years.

JHC: Well, he could make the right decisions.

DCI: Since you knew both men, could you make any contrasts in their personalities?

JHC: When Truman relieved MacArthur I felt like a divorce in my family had occurred.

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DCJ: Where were you at the time that you got the news? You were with the 23rd Infantry?

JHC: Yes, I was commanding the 23rd.

DCJ: Well, you probably hadn't received any warning that a confrontation was coming to a head.

JHC: None whatever, no.

DCJ: I mean, to those at the front Tokyo and Washington were a long way off.

JHC: I've just come from this 2nd Division reunion, and it would surprise you on how many of these ex-GIs had no more idea who their battalion commander was than they did who the King of Siam was.

DCJ: Much less a division or corps commander. What was your reaction when you got the news? Was it shock, or surprise, or how would you describe it?

JHC: Well, to me it was sort of disbelief, I think. One great man couldn't do that to another great man. But now my reaction is that, I don't care who you are, the Commander-in-Chief is the Commander-in-Chief and you ought to have enough sense not to defy him.

DCJ: Well, as a retired general and looking back over this, do you think MacArthur was guilty of insubordination?

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JHC: Uncalculatedly. He was one of the most intelligent men that ever wore a uniform or didn't wear a uniform. You know, there's so many "if's" in anybody's life, or in the history of a country, that the cost of something you don't realize at the time. Senator Taft came pretty close to being the Republican nominee except Eisenhower's bandwagon hadn't started. MacArthur was his selection to be Vice-President. Taft would have only lived a few months, as we now know, and MacArthur would have been President pretty shortly after Taft was inaugurated. Had MacArthur become President, Ned Almond would have been the top military guy in America, and Jack Chiles wasn't very far behind Ned Almond, but that's an awful lot of "if's", isn't it?

DCI: What kind of President do you think MacArthur would have made?

JHC: I think he probably would have been better than Eisenhower.

DCI: You mean more aggressive, or active?

JHC: Yes. I think he had more grasp of things. Well, he'd been over an emperor; he had some terrific experience being head of a country. There's one thing about MacArthur that I don't know whether it's ever occurred to you: I never heard of him relieving anybody. He made it easy for Sutherland to go after Sutherland brought his girl friend up from Australia, but did you ever hear of MacArthur relieving anybody?

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DCJ: Not directly. Harding, you know, was relieved at Buna, and there were a couple of other episodes of division commanders in the Southwest Pacific who were relieved, but they were mainly Walter Krueger's decisions.

JHC: MacArthur was no politician, but he was a terrific actor. He could have been on the stage.

DCJ: Do you think, again, knowing both men and the very nature of their strong wills, that there was some type of collision that was almost inevitable between MacArthur and Truman eventually?

JHC: Well, I don't know, considering the way MacArthur proceeded with what he was doing. After all, Truman, while he had a little more earthy, less educated brain than MacArthur, was also a whale of a good politician. Whatever you think of President Carter, he's got the same sort of reaction. You can only push him so far, and when it's politically expedient, I don't think he'd have any more compunction about firing anybody than Truman did.

DCJ: I've noticed a Henry Chiles oral history tape in the Truman Library collection. That's your father, isn't it?

JHC: My father. My father, Mr. and Mrs. Truman, and Charlie Ross, who was then with the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and who became the Press Secretary, were all high school classmates. Harry

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Truman was more like an uncle to me. He had no son of his own. He put on what I think was a show of disliking military generals, although General Marshall was, if anything, his idol, but still somewhere in there was some sour grapes. His eyes weren't good enough for him to go to West Point.

And, of course, his real fame came as Battery D commander. But one of the great things about great men to me are the ones who can pay attention to detail. Al Gruenther is one of those guys. Every time my name would show up, which it did from time to time, not so much in World War II. but in Korea, Harry Truman, who obviously had a clipping service, would send the clippings from the Independence Examiner, the Kansas City Star, Time magazine, or whatever it was, and say, “Dear Henry, I’m just as proud of Jack as you are--and hand-written. To me, it’s sort of like if you want to get something done, ask somebody that’s real busy to do it, not somebody who isn’t very occupied. But Truman never had so much to do that he didn’t pay attention to his friends. That’s one of the signs of his greatness, I mean.

DCJ: Okay, we’ve turned to the word “great.” Each of us differs on how we define it; it’s a relative term. What traits of greatness would you say MacArthur had, General Chiles? And then in turn, I want to follow that with what you think were his chief weaknesses.

JHC: I think General MacArthur had one of the greatest intellects I’ve had, in my lifetime, an opportunity to observe. He was

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a wonderful, original thinker. The Inchon landing, for instance, that would never have gotten through in War Plans Division in the Pentagon. As we know, it was a stroke of genius almost, in retrospect. He could impress anybody. I’ve forgotten the name of that Senator from Nevada, who built what’s now the Hoover Dam. He was an out-and-out opponent of MacArthur--a very outspoken opponent. He came over, and I was there to usher the Senator in through MacArthur’s private door, which was only opened on occasions like that. He went in alone with MacArthur. When he came out and until now, if he’s still alive today, he’s one of the greatest boosters MacArthur ever had. He had a charm that’s given to very few people. As I said, it was his grasp of things. He could grasp what was going on in this revolution in the society of the Japanese, and he had a vision, too.

DCJ: One thing that bugs me about him, though, is why he didn’t ever get away from the Dai Ichi and the Embassy and go out into Japan. I grant he did a damn good job with the Occupation, but he never visited Eichelberger down at Yokohama, he never went out to division headquarters, he didn’t inspect troops, he didn’t see Japanese, or what his SCAP civil sections were doing. He simply took reports from section chiefs like Marquat and Whitney and accepted them.

JHC: And I suppose you have reservations about those people, too.

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DCJ: Yes. But he acted that way, by the way, when you were in Manila before World War II. He would send reports back to Washington about this marvelous Philippine Army that he was building, and old George Grunert in the Philippine Department knew darn well that they weren’t up to the Philippine Scouts, He was picturing them as better than Philippines Scouts, and actually they were more like Boy Scouts. But MacArthur never went out and saw those Philippine Army camps. And I see a repeat of this in Tokyo: he isolates himself, and he relies on this group of sycophants to report to him.

JHC: You’ve analyzed it very well. It’s sort of like the Mayor of Independence: He never went outside his room.

DCJ: All right, but if he’s a brilliant man, why wouldn’t he have gone out into Japan? It looks like he would have at least taken Mrs. MacArthur and gone over to Nara to see some of the shrines. You know, just a normal American’s curiosity.

JHC: You would think so. Well, I think in himself, within his own brain, he'd long since decided he was a man of destiny with a divine duty to perform in this world, and that whatever he got was divine guidance.

DCJ: Yes, and, I guess, to him this was the imperial way--to isolate yourself and not mix.

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JHC: I'm afraid FDR, from what I've read, became the same way. He was so surrounded by people who said "Yes, sir."

DCJ: What would you say, General Chiles, were MacArthur's chief weaknesses? If he had an Achilles heel, what was it?

JHC: Well, he had a vanity that was out of this world. It seemed to me that he willed things to be. He decided the Chinese would not intervene in the Korean War, for instance. Of course, Willoughby produced intelligence to prove that they weren't going to enter the war. I guess that his feeling was he was omnipotent, when he really wasn't.

DCJ: Did the man have a sense of humor? People that act omnipotent, I've noticed, are the one's that can't laugh at themselves. They can't look in a mirror and laugh.

JHC: Well, remember that one story about the young major that said, "Three, please." On a trip to Seoul, I've forgotten what the date was, but originally it was set up for the thirteenth, and Hal Eastwood who . . .

DCJ: Yes, he was G-4.

JHC: No, this was before the Korean War, because Hal Eastwood became the G-4. I guess it was an inspection. Anyway, General MacArthur was going to Korea for something, and Hal Eastwood called up and said he wasn't going to go because it was on the thirteenth of the month. I thought General Almond would tell him to go soak

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his head. But he said, "This is all right. Make it the twelfth." General MacArthur boarded the airplane, his "Bataan". When it was hurtling down the runway, Colonel Eastwood (he'd been busted back from BG) almost tore his seatbelt off and jumped up. He'd discovered he was sitting in seat thirteen. General MacArthur thought that was funny.

DCJ: You found something on that little scratch pad of yours that would be of value. What was it, General?

JHC: When the Korean War came about, the GHQ was in the process of putting its divisions through a period of amphibious training. What the Marines call a troop-training unit was on the communications ship Mount McKinley, which later was sort of the flagship going into the Inchon landing. We had trained the 1st Cavalry Division in amphibious training when the Korean War hit. Well, here we had a Captain Forney, Navy, in charge of this troop--training unit, and it consisted of staff people from 1,2,3,4, across the board. We were able to keep those people and assimilate them in the X Corps staff. If we hadn't, we would never have been able to load our ships really to get this armada going--loaded and landed. I had ended up with several of these operations types in my G-3 section, which was just splendid. While this doesn't detract from General MacArthur's brains in thinking up the thing and all the planning that went into it, the execution of it owes more to this one little troop-training unit than almost any other part of the success of the Inchon landing.

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DCJ: That's interesting. I don't think I've heard that before.

JHC: Instead of calling it an "amphibious landing," we called it an "amphibious takeoff." That's what these same guys helped out so much in.

DCJ: As far as the responsibility for the basic decision on Inchon, though, would you give full credit to MacArthur?

JHC: Absolutely. It was his concept. All you have to do is look at the details.

DCJ: What about at your level at the time, from July on until the thing was signed and sealed, were your people skeptical or enthusiastic?

JHC: No, just behind schedule, I think.

DCJ: The common statement that you've seen in print is that MacArthur had to stand virtually alone on this thing from July till a couple of weeks before it was carried out.

JHC: He didn't stand alone. Those of us in GHQ who were appointed to General Almond's X Corps staff were selected because we were just like, I suppose, in a business enterprise. If you're selected to head up something for a brand new program, my attitude is to see how good a job I can do, and I had, I'm sure, no reservation about the wisdom of the project. It's my job to execute it. Later I began to have some reservations

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when my classmates Westmoreland and Abrams were running Vietnam, and some of the goofy policies that came out of the White House. It probably was about time I retired when I did. In World War II, I thought some omnipotent wizard was working out all the stuff we were doing. It's too bad to get old and cynical.

DCJ: Can you see anything else there in your notes that might be worth sharing?

JHC: When the Korean War hit, as I think I mentioned, I was the first one sitting there when the crazy voice of this colonel in Seoul said that the North Koreans were attacking. Brigadier General Roberts, who had been in command in Korea, was halfway between Japan and Hawaii when the thing hit. Then Colonel (later Lieutenant General) Sterling Wright was the senior American in Seoul. But he was over in Tokyo putting his wife Tilly (Matilda Bassinger from Kansas City) and their kids on the ship which would return them. So when the thing hit, Roberts was gone, and Wright was at church, as it turned out, with Jimmy Polk, who later commanded in Europe. He's one of Willoughby's minions. I got word from General Almond down in the office and was told to find Sterling Wright, get an airplane cranked up, and get him back to Korea. We knew Sterling Wright was at church, but that was like saying you're in church in New York City. Where do you start looking? We finally got Sterling Wright back. In the meantime a lot of the American positions, or compounds, were overrun up there west and

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northwest of where the peninsula sticks out. The thing was out of hand. There was no American leadership really over there for the first twenty-four hours after it hit.

DCJ: Do you notice any other notes you have there?

JHC: One thing in defense of General Almond. I'm trying to think of the name of the commander of the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, at this time.

DCJ: Lent Shepherd?

JHC: Lem Shepherd. He and Almond were VMI classmates. General MacArthur, you know, was trying to do anything to get troops, and the Marine Corps steadfastly refused to send anybody into the Korean War. Lem Shepherd came over--he and Almond had always been good friends--sat down and formulated a message to General Cates, who at that time was Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Shepherd followed it up. I don't know how many of the Marines know this, but Ned Almond was responsible for getting Marines into the Korean War. If they hadn't gotten into the war, it would really have been too bad.

DCJ: You skipped a step there, or I didn't catch it. How would you attribute that responsibility to him?

JHC: Because MacArthur had not been able to convince the Department of the Navy or the Marine Corps--I forget what route he went up through the JCS--to produce any Marines.

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DCJ: It was Almond that sold Shepherd?

JHC: Almond sold Shepherd on saying, "Okay, Lem, you sit down here and let's figure out how we can take battalions from the Mediterranean." Then Shepherd got the idea, and he said, "I know damn well they can pull these people from the Mediterranean." I remember that's one place they got them, to assemble these guys to form a Marine division. And with all this ammunition, MacArthur then sent a message, and either Cates bought it or the JCS bought it. So that broke the camel's back, which, I think, ought to be a kind of tribute to Ned Almond there. He and Lem Shepherd together are the ones that sort of pushed the Marines into the Korean War.

DCJ: I hadn't heard that.

JHC: I don't know whether those messages are still around or whether anybody can find them.

DCJ: Probably so.

JHC: When the Korean War started, all of our messages were pink. You've probably seen a lot of them. And immediately, in order to differentiate the Korean War stuff from everything else, they put a green border around the pink messages. Somewhere in there, in the middle of the summer, could be found a message that influenced the JCS to make a Marine division available for the Korean War.

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DCJ: Do you think that's about it, General Chiles?

JHC: Well, I could talk for a long time, of course.

DCJ: Well, I wanted you to look carefully over those notes of yours.

JHC: Have you talked to Larry Bunker?

DCJ: Yes, on several occasions.

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JHC: Of course, he would actually say nothing against General MacArthur.

DCJ: Oh, no. He has a fair amount to say against Whitney, though.

JHC: Oh, he does?

DCJ: Yes, I was surprised.

JHC: Well, there was a lot of infighting in that area.

DCJ: You know, I believe anybody that tried to get to the right or left arm of MacArthur faced enmity and jealousy from the others who were maneuvering for the same position. That's the conclusion I've reached over the years. For example, if Sutherland is Chief of Staff and Whitney comes in, you can bet that they're going to dislike each other eventually because they're maneuvering for the right or left arm of the throne.

JHC: I must presume this happened.

DCJ: This happened to Whitney and Willoughby. Willoughby can't stand Whitney. And as for Almond, you couldn't help but understand why the Chief of Staff would resent Whitney.

JHC: And be jealous of his own prerogatives.

DCJ: Yes. Well, we'll close on that.

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